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ABSTRACT

A comparison study of the school-to-work transitions of young people aged 16-19 in Germany and England was followed up several years later when the former subjects were in their early twenties. Research was conducted through interviews, case studies, and studies of labor market trends. The analysis of the transition of the young people studied identified four types of transition behavior: strategic, step by step, wait and see, and taking chances; it classified career patterns as progressive, upward drift, stagnant, downward drift, and repaired. The study found that the German system better prepared young people for the labor market, but that it was more unforgiving of those who had not been good students as well as more rigid, making career change difficult. In contrast, the English system was more flexible, responding almost constantly to changing conditions, but it encouraged too many young people to leave school at age 16 and failed to help them to gain transferable skills and a long-term perspective. In both countries, resources for helping young people were available, but they were not sufficient to overcome difficult family situations or economic problems. In both countries, lack of jobs, rather than individual fault, was also a root cause of transition problems of the young people. The study recommended that governments in both countries develop structured policies for transitions for young people. (Contains 135 references.) (KC)

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ED 370 001

Becoming adults in England and Germany

Edited by
Karen Evans
and
Walter R. Heinz

ANGLO-GERMAN FOUNDATION

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Becoming adults in England and Germany

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Edited by
Karen Evans
and
Walter R. Heinz

A project of the
Anglo-German Foundation for
the Study of Industrial Society

The Anglo-German Foundation for the Study of Industrial Society was established by an agreement between the British and German governments after a state visit to Britain by the late President Heinemann, and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1973. Funds were initially provided by the German government; since 1979 both governments have been contributing.

The Foundation aims to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of industrial society in the two countries and to promote contacts between them. It funds selected research projects and conferences in the industrial, economic and social policy area, designed to be of practical use to policymakers.

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GLOSSARY

Glossary

ABM	*Arbeitsbeschaffungsmaßnahme* job creation programmes
A-level	Advanced level of the General Certificate of Education - equivalent to the *Abitur* in Germany - taken at 18+
BAföG	*Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz*
BFS	*Berufsfachschule* Specialist vocational school
BFS/q	Training scheme leading to qualifications taken exclusively in a vocational school
BIBB	*Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung* Federal Institute for Training
BMBW	*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Wissenschaft* Federal Ministry for Education and Science
BTEC	Business and Technical Education Council qualification
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CEDEFOP	The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training
CGLI	City and Guilds London Institute qualification
CPVE	Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education
CSE	Certificate of Secondary Education (preceded GCSE)
DE	Department of Employment
DES	Department of Education and Science
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
EC	European Commission
ET	Employment Training
FE	Further Education
FOS	*Fachoberschule* Specialist secondary school
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
G1, G2, G3	*Grundbildungslehrgang* Vocational preparation (skills) course

HE	Higher education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
HND	Higher National Diploma
IT	Information technology
LEA	Local Education Authority
NCVQ	National Council for Vocational Qualifications
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
O-level	Ordinary level of the General Certificate of Education taken at 16+
OND	Ordinary National Diploma
RSA	Royal Society of Arts qualifcation
TEC	Training and Enterprise Council
TVEI	Technical and Vocational Education Initiative
VET	Vocational Education and Training
YTS	Youth Training Scheme

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

As the time taken to reach adult status has lengthened in all European countries, the provision of resources and support to guide and assist young people in making the transition to adulthood has become increasingly important. Yet, little is known about the ways young people are coming to terms with new social demands and living circumstances – still less what kind of personal, social and financial support they need, and what role education, training, work and the community should have in providing it. How do young adults make their choices, and how can they optimise their decisions for personality development and their role as citizens? What resources and support are needed to master and improve the transition to independence and self-determination? In the context of European integration, these questions have even more pressing significance, with the reform of vocational education and training, together with the reduction of gender-based, regional and social disadvantage being high on the agenda.

In our earlier study, published by the Anglo-German Foundation (Bynner and Roberts, 1991), young people aged 16 to 19 from two West German cities, Bremen and Paderborn, were matched with their counterparts, following broadly the same routes from education into the labour market, in the two British cities, Liverpool and Swindon. Bremen and Liverpool were chosen to represent contracting labour markets, Paderborn and Swindon, expanding labour markets. Our follow-up study, reported in this volume, has provided a unique opportunity to track the experiences and situations of these young people, now young adults in their early 20s, at a time of unprecedented economic and social change in Europe.

In our first study we documented how cultural assumptions about the ways in which young people should be prepared for adulthood and working life via a combination of education, training and work, are reflected in different concepts of youth as a period of anticipatory socialisation. They are also reflected in the organisation and time frames through which this process occurs. Germany has a strongly institutionalised system of preparation for work, based

on extended socialisation and training. England's arrangements for the transition from school to work are weakly institutionalised and young people are in many respects closer to the labour market and to adult responsibilities at an earlier age. In each of the trajectories studied, English young people were entering the labour market at least two years ahead of their German counterparts. Thus, they were confronted with work responsibilities and granted adult roles earlier. These differences were conceptualised as **accelerated** and **extended** transitions that are mirrored in the biographies and career outcomes of young people.

In short, our study revealed quite different conceptions of what it means to be ready for work in England and Germany and produced a set of questions to improve transition processes in both countries. This does not mean that either Britain or Germany should adopt each other's system. Neither had a system that would guarantee a self-determined and future-oriented preparation for adult status, not least because of the challenge of the requirements of mobility and qualification equivalency in the single European labour market. Both countries have to identify future requirements and to build on national traditions in combination with models from other European societies.

For Germany, this meant finding ways of introducing greater flexibility into the dual system of vocational education and training, by allowing more opportunities for 'sideways movement' and career opportunities beyond the level of regulated vocational standard. For England, it meant finding ways of upgrading vocational preparation which finishes too soon and at too low a level for the individuals' or the society's long-term good. This also meant addressing the lack of a training culture and the need to set standards rather higher than the current policy on vocational qualifications.

New findings

In our first study we saw signs of what we thought was early marginalisation of school-leavers who could not start with entry level jobs in England or did not obtain the apprenticeship in

Germany's dual system. The German system was seen to be more unforgiving than the English one to those who had been poor achievers at school or had subsequently dropped out of training. By 1991 the labour market situation in Germany had improved, however. We found that many of the young people who had been in difficulty before had managed to get on to the qualification route, and the system offered continuing opportunities over a sufficiently long period for most young people to obtain some kind of skill and certification.

Our research has underscored our earlier view that the British system was less effective for all young people other than those in the academic route, because it was so strongly labour market dependent. For example, multiple routes into employment were possible in Swindon until its labour market collapsed under recession. In Liverpool the situation remained much the same during the years of our study: high unemployment, fierce competition for jobs and training schemes as 'warehousing', where young people were kept off the streets.

The accelerated transition in Britain involved status changes and expectations from school kid to adult with all the accoutrements of money, status and independence that this implied. Failure to achieve this passage created frustration and endless seeking of new opportunities. In contrast to Germany the institutions of the wider English society treated most school-leavers as near-adults; banks and building societies were prepared to lend money to young people, issue credit cards and overdrafts.

In our analysis of transition biographies we found that different types of behaviour and career patterns in some ways transcend national boundaries and in other ways demarcate them even more clearly. We have identified four types of transition behaviour: **strategic**, **step by step**, **wait and see** and **taking chances**. Our classification of career patterns as **progressive**, **upward drift**, **stagnant**, **downward drift** and **repaired** accounts for the different outcomes of particular transition behaviours, in interaction with trajectory. We have summarised the optimum mode of transition as active individualisation, i.e. a process of self-determined decision-making between occupational goals and in the choice of pathways to enter

them. This contrasts with the forms of passive individualisation in which goals are weakly defined and strategies to achieve them uncertain.

We have observed that in both countries these modes of individualisation and the career patterns that characterise them have structural foundations in social class, gender and region. Those in the top trajectories, typically high achievers with strong social support tend to the active mode and those in the lower trajectories, typically poor achievers with weak social networks tend to have a more reactive behaviour pattern. Girls' mode of transition has to overcome more obstacles than boys, and because of the perceived conflicting demands of a domestic career, operates through a much narrower range of occupational choices. This might suggest that the less institutional English framework would encourage passive and reactive approaches to career development. This, however, is an over-simplification. In England, step by step transition behaviour was urged upon the young people by the fluid nature of the opportunities available in the regional labour markets. In Germany, step by step behaviour was encouraged by the highly structured system which offered alternatives and a longer time frame for decision-making. More pro-active strategies were also encouraged by the German arrangements which set out clear and regulated pathways. For those with occupational goals in England, the ways of achieving them were often less transparent and, therefore, step by step behaviour was often the dominant response. In both countries risk-taking was also urged on young people, however, in different ways. Exploring options was possible within the institutionally supported transition networks of Germany. In England, risk-taking tended to be confined to the buoyant labour markets.

Our research showed a range of personal, social and institutional services that young people call upon in making their transition choices. We found that in England, careers advice at school and beyond was plentiful, especially for those on vocational routes, but most of it was of an information-centred kind with little attempt to build up the young person's competence for seeking and utilising advice for following through a vocational decision. In Germany there is a need for providing careers advice that would be more than

just formal information about job requirements. In both countries, those who are in most need of career guidance, young people who are locked into stagnant or downward career patterns, and girls, were least likely to get reliable and continuous advice.

Career services, however, are not sufficient to overcome difficult family situations and the lack of financial resources that present a serious threat to many young people's prospects. In Germany, because of the assumed dependency status over a longer period and financial allowances for those young people whose families cannot support them, young people are enabled to keep their options open for much longer than in England. Here the preferred response toward difficult family situations and financial problems was to terminate education and seek a job and, in many cases, leave home – even if only temporarily. Reliance on parental support could produce situations of real hardship, consequently increasing the pressure to drop out of the education system. Problems were also evident in Germany, when college studies took longer than expected, part-time work was taken on, or the apprenticeship was a dead-end.

We conclude that there is an urgent need for a comprehensive policy in both countries that would combine training with financial support for young people who will have to make a living in an integrated European labour market. Such a policy needs to be built on the recognition that after a certain age there is a positive benefit to be gained in vocational training, and possibly combining these qualifications with further education or even academic studies. This implies the need not only for larger elements of targeted financial support through grants and loans over a longer period of time, but also for higher standard educational and training facilities, combined with affordable housing for young people.

Turning to the dual system in Germany, we had our attention drawn to the generally low status and poor facilities of many *Berufsschulen*. For girls, whose training was more heavily school-based, typically at the *Berufsfachschule*, it meant an inferior and more restricted form of vocational education and training. One of the major challenges for Germany, therefore, is to restore the *Berufsschule* to its rightful place as a core element of vocational

training. This means better training for teachers and more investment of resources. Another important structural innovation involves breaking down the distinction between general and vocational education by opening up access to higher education via vocational certificates and encouraging a much greater mixture of academic and vocational experiences for young people. In contrast to the German *Berufsschule* which was regarded as an appendix to firm-based training, the English Further Education College was very positively regarded by the young people who entered it. The problem in England was, as in Germany, under-resourcing. However, the crucial issue for England is how to integrate further education and youth training provision with what is on offer in the local labour market to ensure that both students and employers see the various elements, vocational education, training and jobs, as inseparable.

Questions for Europe

Are either the German or the English transition systems ideal for Europe? The institutional structure of the German transition system and the regard paid to certified vocational skills and knowledge does appear to provide a framework that will satisfy the needs of most societies. Its weaknesses are perhaps too rigid boundaries between academic and vocational routes, the gendered way in which it operates, 'cooling out' girls at a crucial stage and the failure to accommodate those young people who prefer work to education and training. England offers a wide range of shorter transition routes. These routes depend too heavily on the vagaries of local labour market conditions and the attitudes of employers. Most routes are unregulated, without any yardsticks by which the quality of training can be judged according to universal standards, and there is still little recognition by employers of the importance of qualifications. Thus, many young people are trapped in downward career patterns. Without guidance and allowances their behavioural response is often limited to wait and see or to taking risks which will push them to the margins of society.

The answer for both countries could lie in creation of a more flexible version of the German transition system – one which offers a wider range of routes to skilled status, ranging from full-time college through apprenticeship to mixtures of work and training extending over much longer periods of time than is currently the case in England. Age barriers to education or training make little sense in a world where some form of training and further education is likely to be needed through most of the adult life. According to our results, preference should be given to a period of stable and basic vocational education and training over direct integration into labour markets at age 16. Bringing the whole system together should be a unified qualification framework through which young people can be guaranteed not only job prospects but also further progression into higher education or to more specialised occupations in the labour market. This must also be backed by support networks that enable young people to withstand the difficulties of study and ensure that they are properly supported financially and have access to the right kind of advice when they need it. Girls especially need more targeted help in all these respects to ensure that the full range of occupations is open to them and in order to keep them in progressive or upward career patterns. Within the European Community the basis for building a system of mutual recognition of qualifications and for supporting disadvantaged young people on their pathway into the labour market must be set in place. Crucial are the means to recognise and transfer qualifications and to provide support services to go with them that will guarantee real freedom of movement and employment throughout the whole community.

CHAPTER I

Transitions in progress

Introduction

In all European countries, the provision of resources and support to assist young people in making the transition to adulthood has become increasingly important. The time taken to achieve full adult status has increased significantly in the latter part of the twentieth century. No longer is financial independence a prerequisite for family responsibilities and citizenship. Yet little is known about the way that young people are adjusting to the new circumstances, still less what kind of personal, social and financial support they need, and what role education, training, work and the community should have in providing it. How can young adults be assisted to make the choices which will maximise their personal fulfilment and their effectiveness as adult citizens? What resources and support are needed to smooth the transition to independence and self-sufficiency?

In our earlier study, published by the Anglo-German Foundation in 1991 (Bynner and Roberts, 1991), 160 young people aged 16–19 from Bremen and 160 young people from Paderborn were matched with their counterparts, following broadly the same routes from education into the labour market, in two English cities, Liverpool and Swindon. Bremen and Liverpool were chosen to represent contracting labour markets, and Paderborn and Swindon, expanding labour markets. This follow-up study has provided a unique opportunity to track the experiences and situations of these young people, now young adults in their early 20s, at a time of unprecedented change in Europe.

Perspectives

As economic achievement has become the main determinant of integration into adult society, educational and occupational institutions have gained a dominant position among the social organisations which shape the process of transition.

When looking at transition internationally, a common starting-point is, therefore, a comparison of the institutional arrangements which structure the transition process – whether the 'schooling model' of North America, the dual model of the Germanic countries or the 'mixed model' of the United Kingdom. Indeed, this was a starting-point for our own initial study. Questions of 'which model works best?' or 'could a different model solve our problems?' are frequently posed and sometimes answered. For example, the Confederation of British Industry, in *Towards a Skills Revolution* (CBI, 1989), proposed that a wholesale adoption of the German dual system could solve the UK's long-standing training and employment problems. But such questions (and answers) often ignore the fundamental relationships between the institutions of education and training, and the other social, cultural and economic structures of society which make them work in the way they do.

Our first study focused on these relationships, and produced a set of questions for both Britain and Germany to address. We did not advise either Britain or Germany to adopt each other's system. Neither had a system matching the needs of the present, and the future represented a significant challenge to both, not least because of the requirements of mobility of labour and equivalency of qualifications in the Single European Market. Both needed to identify future requirements and to build on national assets and strengths to achieve these, we concluded. For Germany this meant finding ways of introducing greater flexibility into the dual system, allowing more opportunities for 'sideways movement' and challenge beyond the level of regulated minimum standards. For England, it meant finding ways of upgrading vocational preparation which, in the main, 'finishes too soon and at too low a level for the individual's or the economy's long-term good'. It also meant addressing the lack of a 'training culture' and setting sights rather higher than the current policy on vocational qualifications.

Our revelation that our findings 'had not repeated the now familiar story of all-round German superiority' was the press equivalent of 'man bites dog', it seemed. The British popular press coverage was at best exaggerated and misleading, at worst totally wrong

in claiming the British way of training to be wholly vindicated. Our second study shows how far wrong.

Critical policy issues surrounding institutional and social support for young people making the transition to adulthood are best explored with some theoretical understanding of the social and developmental processes taking place, and the ways in which these are shaped and experienced within different economic and cultural contexts. Our first study showed how cultural assumptions about the ways in which young people should be prepared for adult and working life via a combination of education, training and work are reflected in concepts of youth as a period of 'anticipatory socialisation' and in the time frames over which this socialisation process occurs. In short, the research revealed quite different conceptions of what it means to be ready for work in England and Germany. In these two countries, as in all industrialised societies, youth has become a period of 'waiting and rehearsing' with uncertain status. This interim period between adolescence and adulthood is given positive connotations by use of the term 'anticipatory socialisation'. But other theorists have criticised this conception. Dalin (1983), for example, argues that this concept reflects society's failure to understand or respond to the needs of young people.

> Policies towards youth in most of the Western industrialised countries fail to see that many of the 'problems' associated with contemporary youth are the direct result of conditions that consign them to social and economic limbo. (Dalin 1983: 9)

This approach argues that rather than a process of anticipatory socialisation which 'prepares' young people for 'future' responsibility, what is needed is both preparation for, and experience with, real responsibility. Responsibility should not be earned by demonstrating that one is ready: it should be learned by experiencing and exercising it (Dollar and Rust, 1983). These two theoretical perspectives are of direct relevance to our Anglo-German comparisons.

Germany has a strongly institutionalised system of preparation for work based on extended anticipatory socialisation. England's arrangements for youth transition are weakly institutionalised and young people are in many respects closer to the labour market and

to 'real responsibility' at an earlier age. In each trajectory studied, young English people were entering the labour market at least two years ahead of their German counterparts and experiencing higher degrees of responsibility and remuneration. We conceptualised these differences as accelerated vs extended transitions. The differences were also manifested in value orientations towards work, education and career. Work cultures and recruitment strategies of employers in England and Germany are expressed in different emphases that young people place on training as a prerequisite for a career, and in attitudes of parents to financial support.

Despite the differences, in both societies young people experience uncertain status and are dependent upon state and parental support for longer periods than would have been the case a generation ago. Increasing institutional segmentation means that young people have to find their own pathways for individual development and social integration in the separated domains of education, consumption, politics, work and family life. Accession to adult status within these domains comes at different times and in different ways, and young people face 'status inconsistency' in this respect (Hurrelmann and Engel, 1989).

Our first study showed early accession to adult status in the economic domain for our English sample, in contrast with the German sample, which were still training for a trade, in a scheme, or at *Gymnasium*. We had little evidence of different ways in which adult status is achieved and recognised in different domains, or of ways in which young people negotiate these perilous waters. Our aim in this second study has been to uncover the different ways in which 'transition' occurs, and through this improved understanding to put forward realistic and well-founded suggestions for the improvement of youth policies, not only in relation to education and training but also in relation to personal, social and financial support.

Trajectories and labour market segmentation

We started our work by distinguishing four patterns or trajectories that constitute the transition from school to work in both societies:

- **I**: academic mainstream leading towards higher education;
- **II**: training and education leading to skilled employment: dual system in Germany; work-based training and apprenticeships, or further education college leading to vocational qualifications in Britain;
- **III**: other forms of education and training leading typically to semi-skilled employment, or stepping stones to skilled employment;
- **IV**: early labour market experience of unskilled jobs, unemployment and 'remedial' training schemes.

In Germany these trajectories train for different segments of the labour market. Young adults following the academic route (trajectory I) are prepared to enter professional occupations after finishing university. Young people who move through training for vocational qualifications (trajectory II) will be employed either as skilled white-collar or blue-collar workers in more or less stable careers in a core labour force of big companies, or in small or medium enterprises. Those who leave school-based vocational training (trajectory III) with qualifications also expect to start in the skilled segments of the labour market. They, however, are confronted with reluctant employers who prefer recruits who have had firm-based training. Therefore, many young people try to move from trajectory III to trajectory II in order to obtain the more valued credentials of an apprentice trained in a firm. Thus, their transition process not only becomes more complicated, but also costs more time.

The young people who are trapped in unemployment and underemployment (trajectory IV) are at the bottom of the opportunity structure. Some of them manage to complete missing qualifications

through training schemes for the socially deprived. With this achievement they attempt to move into trajectory II, sometimes via vocational schooling in trajectory III. For those who miss these connections for upward mobility within the trajectory structure, only casual work in the peripheral segment of the labour market is offered as an alternative to unemployment. Their situation, however, is highly dependent on the local labour market. In a booming economy it is much easier to find casual jobs and to hold on to them, maybe, in time, moving into a more stable work arrangement. In a declining local economy, the likelihood for stable employment in this peripheral segment is much lower, because even the more qualified compete for bad jobs (see Sengenberger, 1987; Heinz, 1990).

The English transition patterns are much more loosely linked to labour market 'segments'. As our earlier study showed, the British trajectories are less institutionalised and more young people enter the labour market without explicit vocational training. Since there are very few well-organised apprenticeships with City and Guilds examinations (comparable to the German trajectory II) most labour market bound youths have to enter trajectory III or IV first in order to get a chance of firm-based training and/or for a skilled job with stable employment.

Depending on the condition of the local labour market, young people who are in trajectory IV may have a chance to combine casual work with some on-the-job training, for instance in the sales or fast food business. Most of them, however, move between unemployment, casual jobs and sometimes deviant behaviour that locks them in a precarious status of social marginalisation.

We were able to chart the trajectories, as shown in Appendix I. One major conclusion of our first study was that national differences in the organisation of the transition from school to work, for example, in school-leaving ages, vocational education in colleges, apprenticeships, and other forms of on-the-job training create specific frameworks for experiences and attitudes. Trajectories thus mirrored differential opportunities and cultural assumptions about how young people should proceed to adulthood via a combination of training, education and work. They had far more influence on the

young people's future expectations and work attitudes than did their regional labour markets.

Individualisation and the relevance of work for identity

How do young people develop their identities and expectations as adult workers and citizens? Our study of youth transition has implications for the ongoing debate on 'individualised' youth biographies, which argues that changes in the context and experiences of young people allow the formation of individualised identities, as patterns of socialisations previously specific to particular social groups and the collective identities break down.

Development of a personal sense of identity is regarded as central to the process of youth transition. It is related to vocational goal-setting and planning, and to achievement of emotional and psychological independence from parents. According to Erikson (1968), identity is not a product of a smooth process but results from critical developmental stages. These stages involve the young person in managing conflicts between personal motivation and ambitions on the one hand and social demands and controls on the other. Thus, identity is constructed by building a sense of personal worth and efficacy by 'solving' socially relevant developmental tasks and by setting up life goals. These developmental tasks, in contemporary industrialised society, involve becoming financially self-sufficient through work, setting up a separate family unit and connecting with the wider community (Merriam, 1984). During the transition from school to employment, motives and societal concerns are linked with self-image, self-presentation, personal independence and social responsibility. For young people the balance between subjective ambitions, opportunities and risks rests on emotional and material independence from parents, which in turn depends on employment or at least the chance to combine education with part-time jobs.

Choosing a vocation and entering the world of work and employment is one of the most important decisions young people ever

make, maintain Furnham and Stacey (1991) in a recent book about youth in industrial society. Since the early 1980s some youth researchers and social commentators, however, have argued that youth has developed an increasing distance from work in favour of leisure and the easy life. These statements were based on survey studies about changing value orientations in post-industrialised societies. Evidence is now mounting, mainly from qualitative studies, that work has not lost its importance for identity formation of young people. The opposite seems to be true: young people have become more critical of bad jobs; they want to do personally meaningful work. Most obvious is the relevance of qualified work in the life plans of young women who have incorporated employment in their life plans. It seems that at least in the west of the new unified Germany, young people use the extended period of transition to develop an orientation towards work that prefers interesting and demanding work over income, job security and promotion. This is one of the major results of recent qualitative studies, like the one by Baethge et al. (1986), which documents a new 'work-centred' life conception among young people. Similar results are reported by Furnham and Stacey (1991) for Britain. Students who were asked about job satisfaction tended to rank job security, satisfying work, working conditions, career development, salary, responsibility and working hours in a decreasing order of importance. However, those who already had work experiences, rated wages and responsibility much lower than younger students, who felt that career, satisfying work and job security were more important.

The Economic and Social Research Council's 16–19 Initiative, with which this Anglo-German study is linked, found that young people in Britain establish increasingly stable identities between the ages of 16 and 20. Aspects of social identity are well formed by 16, organised around attitudes to institutional authority, gender and race equality, commitment to employment and 'fatalism'. Those unsuccessful in competing for opportunities in the labour market held negative attitudes towards training and new technology, but maintained a high commitment to the value of work. Even apparently undesirable and poorly rewarded jobs could acquire positive

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value when there were few other choices (Banks et al., 1992). Results like these point to the fact that in moving from school to work, young persons may develop career commitments that may stabilise their social and personal identity, in those cases where aspirations for meaningful work can be realised. However, in cases where individual decision-making about training and employment does not lead to a balance between personal preferences and job requirements, identity development is precariously limited, because one's ambitions and orientations cannot be carried through in the work context. This, in turn, will have consequences not only for identity formation, but also for finding satisfying arrangements between aspirations and employment realities during the entire life course.

Our German respondents, at the time of the first study, were still in a formative period on their extended trajectories into employment. Their work orientations reflected the status of trainee or student rather than actual work experience. Thus, a mixture of individual and traditional orientations and scepticism about employment prospects predominated. Quite in contrast, most of our English respondents had more flexible job-orientations combined with optimism about their future prospects. These orientations often reflected their actual experiences in the labour market, and a general acceleration of the preparation for work. For some, however, this could have detrimental effects on their future prospects. An initial conclusion of our first study was that job flexibility among British young people resulted from early work exposure. In contrast, young people in Germany seemed to have more scope and time to explore their interests and skills on entering the labour market. We asked whether their extended transition could provide more opportunity for an 'active mode of individualisation'.

This has provided an important theoretical focus in the second part of our study: to uncover the relationships between the extended transition in Germany, the accelerated transition in England and the individualisation of the life course that is centred around work. According to Beck (1986) and Kohli (1989), in West Germany the general improvement of the standard of living has made it more possible for individuals to pursue their personal interests during the

life course. The expansion of education and training has led to longer periods of preparation and orientation as well as to higher qualifications. Does this development favour processes of self-definition and individual self-determination throughout the life course? We ask whether the shorter period of schooling and the less formalised transition patterns in England socialise British young people to become more adaptive to the labour market. Does this flexibility serve their occupational aspirations and short-term life goals? Do the longer periods of schooling and the more formalised transition patterns in Germany socialise young people to become more selective towards labour market opportunities or does prolonged dependency on institutions of training and education restrict the development of individual flexibility? Does an early exposure to the ups and downs of the labour market create more realistic notions about one's prospects? Does it lead to short-term reactions instead of long-term planning?

The increasing rationalisation of everyday life exerts pressure on young people not only to find their own way, but also to take personal responsibility for failure. In Germany, the process of labour market entry confronts young people with behavioural alternatives which are related to social class, region and gender – factors which still heavily influence timing, range and duration of labour market entry. In England, the behavioural alternatives are much more determined by labour market mechanisms that directly intervene in the trajectories. How far do these tensions create stress for the individual, and how far do they support personality development? When attractive entry positions for qualified youngsters are lacking, then life perspectives and job plans are shattered and identities threatened. On the other hand, when competition for jobs or apprenticeships declines due to an improvement of the labour market, an extended transition can be used to find out what one's own real interests and life goals are. This may be more difficult for young people in Britain who cannot rely on or fall back on education and training institutions that regulate labour market entry in the West German welfare state.

In the second phase of our comparative study the aim has been to uncover the ways that young people have managed to move from

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trajectories into the labour market, to learn about their experiences with institutions that train, certify and counsel them in vocational matters, and to find out relationships between transition experiences, behaviour and career outcomes. Furthermore, we wanted to show differences and similarities of institutional provisions that accompany the transition to work in both countries and to look at the meaning of gender in relation to transition process and outcomes in both countries. Finally, our analysis of interactions between structural conditions, institutional provisions, trajectories, gender and transition outcomes are used to formulate some policy recommendations.

From trajectory to biography: a methodological sketch

As we have already shown in the first phase of our study (Bynner and Roberts, 1991) the analysis of individual transition processes within the context of labour market and career trajectory is a strategic advantage of our methodological design. We have further developed our use of the principle of 'matched groups in context' by focusing the analysis on our respondents' accounts of their personal histories of transition.

Interviewing individuals following four broadly matched pathways, as in each of the research areas about their transition experiences, yields vivid and detailed case histories that enable us to highlight events and influences which have shaped young people's occupational choices, training results and their labour market behaviour.

The research procedure consists of four steps. First, we developed a second questionnaire covering events and movements since the first contact with our respondents in spring 1990. In addition to questions about work and career, the young people were asked about experiences of having been treated as a responsible person, the person they would turn to in case of problems, their main leisure activities, their interest in politics and their self-concept.

Second, this questionnaire was sent to a selection of respondents in each city who had participated in the first phase of the study. Their numbers varied between 95 and 120 in different areas. The response rate was about 50–60% in each research region. In order to construct a theoretical sample (Glaser and Strauss, 1968) we selected five young men and five young women for each of the four trajectories in each city. The main criteria were membership of the older cohort, and the possibility of a broad matching with another young person in the respective trajectory and occupation. These criteria were applied only broadly in Liverpool and Bremen, and more closely in Paderborn and Swindon. Since the questionnaire data do not stem from a representative sample but from a group of respondents selected by a variety of criteria, no statistical data analysis was intended. Therefore, these quantitative data are used only in a descriptive way.

Third, out of this sample, 16 matched respondents (half male and half female, two for each trajectory) were selected from each city. Because of the difficulty of obtaining interviewees within the required time frame, the Liverpool sample included five members of the younger cohort (i.e. typically aged 20 rather than 22). Interviews in all four cities focused on experiences in education, training and work, asking young people to reflect on where they had come from, and to assess their current situations. Interviews in Liverpool and Bremen focused more closely on questions of social support, informal networks and identity formation, as depressed labour markets highlight the means by which young people make their way when faced with difficult employment and economic circumstances. In Swindon and Paderborn, a greater emphasis was placed on the course of training and work, job-seeking acquired skills, longer-term prospects and occupational future destinations of our respondents. This involved distinctive approaches to interview and analysis, set out in Appendix II. The interviews were conducted between February and October 1991; they were all transcribed and at first analysed as individual case histories. Comparative analyses of broad groupings, including cross-sectional comparisons by occupation, gender and trajectory were undertaken in order to document

similarities and differences in the transition behaviours of young people and the main contexts which influence these behaviours.

Finally, we conducted at least 18 expert interviews in each city with various key persons who are well informed about the local labour markets: employers, master craftspeople who work as trainers, social workers, and officials of the labour exchange. The themes discussed with the experts were the current situation of various occupations, expectations and predictions concerning the labour market prospects of youths in major occupations, description of schemes and the quality of training in view of the rising qualification demands with which the young labour force is confronted.

In this way, we have been able to examine, comparatively, the degree of integration of youth into adult roles and responsibilities (through social relationships, educational and support services) and the institutional/social pathways and processes through which young people are helped through the transition of life stages in the two cultures. In line with the framework for comparative analysis of youth transition proposed elsewhere (Evans and Haffenden, 1991) our present study thus attempts to shed light on institutional frameworks and personal experiences that accompany the movements of young people into adult life. More specifically we are dealing with the following themes:

- What are the social influences and institutional patterns that support or restrain the young person's pathways into employment?
- How do the young people account for experiences and decisions they have made while moving along and leaving the respective trajectory?
- What are the circumstances and experiences which lead to predictable careers, upward or downward mobility or 'stagnation' in career terms? What part is played by transition behaviours in reaching different destinations?
- How are personal histories of transition linked with the development of occupational identity and the 'meaning' of work in the lives of young people?

- What kinds of risks do young people take to reshape their life chances?
- How are career movements mediated by institutional and social support structures?
- To what extent does gender influence transition behaviours and career outcomes taking into account differences in training and employment cultures?

These questions will be answered by looking at similarities and differences of our respondents' experiences in the two English and two German local labour markets.

CHAPTER II

Individuals in context: stability and change

Introduction

This chapter sets the context for how the lives of our samples developed between the two surveys in 1989 and 1991. It situates the young adults' experiences, how these had changed, and places them in their national and local contexts. It also looks at their attitudes towards social issues, housing and social relationships and whether there were any noticeable cross-national differences. The evidence is mainly from the questionnaires that were returned by 40 young adults in each area. However, the information obtained from interviews with adults who dealt with young people in some way or another also contextualises the economic and social circumstances within which the young adults' lives were developing. Overall, the intention is to put the transitions of the young people in our samples into their local, national and comparative contexts.

The national contexts

In Britain, the most significant contextual change between 1989 and 1991 was that the economy went into a sharp recession. While this delayed recovery in areas like Liverpool, which had been badly hit in previous recessions, unusually the most marked decline was in more prosperous areas in the south, including Swindon. While not necessarily directly affecting all our samples, most were aware of the effect on the local economies, especially in relation to employment prospects. In Germany, the most significant event was the reunification of the country. In the short term, this fuelled the continuing boom of the German economy. Indeed, allied to a demographic decline of young people, this transformed the immediate prospects of those outside the dual system. Most of those on schemes could now get firm-based training if they still wanted it.

However, most young people felt that the results of reunification had been mixed, in that there were significant disadvantages as well as benefits.

The samples had followed broadly similar but not identical routes towards employment; their experiences inevitably reflected Britain's and Germany's rather different approaches to schooling and vocational training. In England by the 1980s over four-fifths of secondary age children were attending comprehensive schools, and Swindon and Liverpool were among the local education authorities (LEAs) that had abolished selection. In their comprehensive schools, all the young people in Liverpool and Swindon had taken courses leading to GCE (General Certificate of Education) O-levels, CSEs (Certificate of Secondary Education), or mixtures of the two. All the individuals in this research reached age 16 prior to 1988 when O-levels and CSEs were merged into the GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) examinations. In Bremen and Paderborn, as in virtually all parts of (west) Germany, the samples had been separated for secondary education into three types of schools – the *Gymnasium*, the *Realschule*, and the *Hauptschule*. Pupils at the *Gymnasium* had taken no examinations conferring recognised qualifications before attempting the *Abitur* at age 18 or 19, whereas in the English areas all pupils had faced a major set of examinations at 16-plus. Some high achievers in Liverpool and Swindon had entered the labour market immediately, whereas their counterparts in the German *Gymnasium* had no real option but to continue in full-time education until their courses which led to the *Abitur* were completed. *Realschule* and *Hauptschule* pupils had taken the examinations which conferred the leaving certificates from their respective schools at age 16 to 18 whereupon, until the 1970s, the overwhelming majority of such young people entered the dual system. However, in both Germany and Britain there had been a trend towards staying on. By 1991, Germany for the first time had more students than apprentices in the over-18 age group, and in England also the majority of 16 year olds were then remaining in full-time education. Record numbers of young people were applying for higher education in both countries, with age participation rates reaching 20% in England and 30% in Germany. In both

countries the systems of higher education faced considerable strains. In England, increases in funding had not matched the expansion of student numbers, and many young people were aware of the squeeze on higher education funding. The German system was also faced with problems. There was chronic over-crowding, with 1.6 million students in institutions designed for half that number, student accommodation was difficult to find and the proportion of students completing their degrees declined.

In Liverpool most 16 year olds who stayed on continued in their comprehensive schools, though some transferred to further education colleges, whereas in Swindon they transferred either to a sixth-form college or the local college of further education. By the 1980s in Liverpool and Swindon, as throughout England, traditional sixth-formers who took the three or four A-levels normally required to enter higher education were equalled in number by other full-time students, some retaking 16-plus examinations, others maybe taking just one or two A-levels, others taking a Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE) and/or other vocational qualifications. By 1987 the government had begun arranging the 'jungle' of vocational awards within a common framework of national vocational qualifications (NVQs).

Gymnasium students in Bremen and Paderborn had remained at school until age 18 or 19 to take the *Abitur*, as had some of higher achievers from the *Realschulen*. Other 16 year olds in the German areas had enrolled on full-time vocational courses, but in Germany, unlike in England, these were generally considered inferior to firm-based training. Vocational education after age 16 in Germany, whether full-time or part-time, was normally in specialist institutions offering a much narrower range of provision rather than multi-purpose schools or further education colleges. The German vocational colleges, the *Berufsfachschulen*, did not compete with employers, with secondary schools, or with one another for 16–18 year olds in the way that had become common in Britain, where all educational institutions had become anxious to place 'bums on seats'. Although the *Berufsfachschulen* play a key role in the dual system, in practice the state sector *Berufsfachschulen* were grossly under-funded, had low status and had been generally neglected. In

contrast, further education colleges in England were experiencing a surge in popularity with post-16 participation rates markedly increased. In the main, they were also rapidly expanding the range of academic and vocational provision they offered, and the range of student groups for whom they made provision. The sector still faced problems of resources and funding, but in terms of status and student progression, colleges of further education were more significant than they had ever been previously.

The normal first choice of 16-year-old Germans who were not heading for the *Abitur* was the dual system, a combination of firm-based on-the-job training and day or block release. In Germany this regime remained the most important sole route into skilled work for all young people who did not proceed through higher education, and even some *Gymnasium* graduates were serving apprenticeships either before or after their degree courses. Thus, sizeable minorities of young people in Bremen and Paderborn had often taken apprentice training as well as full-time post-compulsory education, whereas in Swindon and Liverpool these were more likely to have been regarded as mutually exclusive alternatives. Full-time vocational education in Germany is invariably subservient to the dual system, so most vocational education is part-time coupled with firm-based training. In England, there was almost always the choice of full-time or part-time study for vocational qualifications at college, although the advent of national vocational qualifications has meant that much vocational education and training has become increasingly work-based.

Germany's apprenticeships have always been more regulated than firm-based training in Britain. Apprentices in Germany have followed prescribed syllabuses and have had to pass tests before being recognised as skilled workers. In Germany there exists a 'training culture' with strong employer commitment to training, whereas in Britain firm-provided training has always been more variable, at the employers' discretion; this remained the case even when, during the 1980s, firms had their efforts subsidised under the Youth Training Scheme (YTS). Another difference has been that employees in Britain have never considered it their responsibility to train in excess of their own labour and skill requirements: employer-

based training with genuine prospects remained relatively rare. Also, employers in Britain have continued to recruit teenagers to non-skilled jobs. This has meant that systematic firm-based training leading directly to skilled status has been more difficult for young people to obtain in Britain than in Germany. The countervailing advantages of growing up in Britain have been the opportunity to earn good wages at a relatively young age, and the fact that the weaker regulation of routes into skilled employment has made it possible for employees to pick up skills opportunistically and thereby climb the occupational hierarchy. Although not all German firm-based training was high quality and there were marked gender inequalities in access to training with prospects, the widespread coverage, the generally high quality of firm-based training and the virtual absence of other routes into skilled jobs meant that around four-fifths of young people in Bremen and Paderborn were entering the labour market through either the academic route or apprentice training. The other two routes from which one-half of our respondents were drawn therefore accounted for far smaller proportions of the age group in the German than in the English areas.

In both countries a variety of schemes had been introduced during the 1970s and 1980s to make good the shortfall in other provisions and to deal with the political problem of youth unemployment. Once in place, these measures also accommodated young people who had problems with full-time education or with employers. Needless to say, these provisions were more plentiful in relatively depressed labour markets such as Bremen and Liverpool than in Paderborn and Swindon. Once again, there was a crucial difference between the countries in that in England, schemes tended to operate as substitutes for work or alternatives to other modes of work entry, whereas in the German areas their primary intention was to prepare young people for the dual system. In practice, German schemes operating in trajectory IV served mainly as 'holding pools' so when the economy picked up they declined rapidly and by 1991 were of marginal significance.

In England, transitions into employment were proceeding more rapidly than in Germany, whatever routes were followed. By age 19–20 young people in Liverpool and Swindon who were not

proceeding through higher education expected to be in proper jobs, whereas in Germany more leisurely transitions were accepted as normal. In Bremen and Paderborn young adults were entering apprenticeships following post-compulsory education. Moreover, the German males faced 12 to 15 months of military or alternative service, usually served between age 18 and 21. Degree studies in Germany took longer than in Britain, and could be preceded by apprentice training. Even so, we did not find that the English samples were consistently the more adult in either their attitudes or lifestyles.

The above presents some broad brush comparisons of the two national contexts. In practice, on most dimensions there were much more sharply marked differences within the two national samples than between them. For example, it was fairly typical that, apart from seeing work as generally important, the attitudes towards work were widely differentiated, as evidenced both by survey and interview data. This is hardly surprising given the wide variations in pay, conditions, prospects and time spent unemployed. Indeed, in both countries similarly sharp dividing lines appeared, not least in a marked labour market segmentation by gender. Similarly, there were significant differences between skilled jobs with prospects and more routine, unskilled, and possibly casual or informal work.

The local contexts

Paderborn

The industrial infrastructure in Paderborn is characterised by a variety of manufacturing companies and a number of public services. This variety helped to overcome a recent crisis when the major employer Nixdorf (10,000 employees, of which 2,200 were apprentices) made half its labour force redundant. The general positive development of the local economy prevented an economic downturn of the region. It seems that the restructuring process of industry since the early 1980s was successful in two respects. It produced a more stable labour market and provided better training opportunities for young people in that the training offered was increasingly

oriented towards jobs for the future. Those made redundant at Nixdorf were qualified workers and had good chances to find new employment in the regional and national labour market. The crisis at Nixdorf, subsequently taken over by Siemens, produced a local hiccough rather than a major dislocation in employment opportunities.

The situation for young adults in the Paderborn labour market markedly improved. This was due to three factors: continuing economic growth, demand for qualified labour, and demographic changes. Following the national trend, a greater proportion of school-leavers enrol with higher education institutions. This, coupled with a sharp demographic decline, meant that the number of school-leavers entering the dual system was halved over the last few years. This led to a surplus of apprenticeships in the local labour market from which manufacturing companies in industry and crafts were hardest hit. In autumn 1990, the local *Arbeitsamt* figures showed that 1,713 vacancies for training could not be filled. This meant that not only did applicants for apprenticeships have better opportunities to find a training place, but also it was more likely to be in vocational fields of their own interest. Similarly, after training, employment opportunities for young people in the local and regional labour market were now greatly enhanced. By 1991 then, in Paderborn, employers competed for apprentices rather than the other way round.

Bremen

A similarly more sanguine picture was also apparent in Bremen. While at the time of our previous survey Bremen was still trying to recover from the structural crisis of the early 1980s, by 1991 recovery was much more firmly established. Whereas the now defunct shipyard A G Weser had been the major employer of the 1970s, employing 7,000 at its peak, the new Daimler-Benz plants were now predominant, employing 14,000 workers in 1988. Jobs had also been created in the public sector, but as late as 1989 employment prospects in Bremen were still difficult, especially for young people. Indeed, even with the strengthening national economy,

the demographic decline and more young people staying longer in non-vocational education, prospects improved only gradually. Thus, when on a national level the employment rates for young people under 20 years had already recovered, young people in the Bremen labour market still could not be provided with a sufficient number of training opportunities. It was not until 1990 that there was eventually a small surplus of training places, and it was still not as easy to get an apprenticeship as in Paderborn. Young people with higher school-leaving certificates still have more and better opportunities in the training market, and while those without may now be able to get apprenticeships, they are likely to be in areas with poorer long-term prospects. Overall then, entry into both training and the labour market was much easier for young people in Bremen in 1991 than it had been for over a decade. This was also due to school-leaving cohorts of smaller sizes. The labour market having become balanced, but certainly not buoyant.

Liverpool

The Liverpool labour market continued to be one of the most depressed in Britain. The legacy of bleak labour market prospects for so many workers, both young and old, for over a decade meant that any easing in the labour market made only a marginal difference to those who had been unemployed for some time. That is, while the employment prospects of 16–19 school or college leavers were brighter than for some time, due to the demographic decline and the increasing numbers staying in full-time education, the prospects for those with a record of labour market difficulties remained grim. The impact of the recession also served to limit what had been a gradual easing of the labour market from the depths of the recession a decade earlier. However, there were marked variations in labour market conditions and prospects within Liverpool; particular districts with little local employment and poor public transport had chronic levels of unemployment. Overall, in 1991, Liverpool remained by far the most depressed labour market not only in our sample, but also one of the most depressed in Britain.

Swindon

While prospects in Liverpool remained much as they had been for most of the 1980s, the effect of the recession meant there was an apparent sea-change in the attitudes of many in Swindon. Swindon had been identified as being at the heart of one of Europe's fastest growing areas (Cecchini, 1988). Its buoyant local economy, particularly from 1985 to 1990, meant there was an expanding demand for labour, including youth labour. The boom was across the industrial spectrum, with employment opportunities in service, clerical and manufacturing employment (Bassett et al., 1990). Employment structures offered a degree of choice to nearly all young people. When the recession really took hold in 1990, with a wave of redundancies and business closures, local unemployment rates although sharply up remained below the national average. Psychologically, however, the impact was much more dramatic. The 'boom' was over, and for the first time many young people (including some of those in our sample), even if still in employment, felt vulnerable. Their prospects were no longer necessarily assured. While this may have been unsettling for those with skills and qualifications, it was potentially devastating for those who had gone into unskilled employment, but had been made redundant in 1990 or 1991.

Attitudes towards social issues

Few young people had strong feelings about party politics in either country. Where concern was expressed in either the interview or the survey, it was more likely to relate to particular issues. This meant that strong feelings about education, housing or what the government should do for young people could coexist with an expressed disinterest in politics. There were only a few sharp national differences, with the young German people much more likely to cite environmental issues as significant, although young people, as others, were likely to be influenced by the changing political agenda. Thus, for example, debate about environmental issues in Britain had been prevalent in 1989, but figured much less promi-

nently in 1991, and this was mirrored in the responses of the English sample. German young people were also much more likely to see 'preventing war' as a 'very important' political task. Not only the historical context of the most likely venue for a major European war being Germany, but also contemporary debates about the role of the army (whether it should remain conscript or become professional) and German reunification all meant that issues around how to secure a continuing peace were much more active in Germany than in Britain. Although the attitudes towards European integration were mixed in both countries, attitudes towards German reunification were different in the two countries. In the English areas, similar proportions of the local samples believed that the results of reunification had been 'generally good' and 'mixed', whereas clear majorities in both German areas believed that the results had been 'mixed' and as many felt that the disadvantages outweighed the benefits as the other way round. This reflected the increasing disenchantment in 1991 of how reunification was operating in practice after the earlier euphoria. Within both German areas negative assessments of reunification were most common among the young adults from trajectory IV; they seemed to fear the increased competition, especially for jobs.

A prevalent view in all four areas was that the young adults' own age group was badly treated by the national government. In all the areas at least one-half of the respondents, and often many more, believed that their governments did not do enough for people their own age as regards jobs, housing and (except in Paderborn) education and training. Also, majorities in Liverpool and Bremen believed that their governments did not do enough for their own age group in terms of recreation. Within both countries the feeling that their own age group was unfairly neglected was most prevalent in the relatively depressed areas. Among those respondents who paid taxes (the majority in all four areas) there were more who felt that they paid 'too much' than who believed that their contributions were 'about right'. This imbalance was roughly 3:1 in Germany and 2:1 in England. The general feeling in all areas and in both countries seemed to be that young adults were being asked by their govern-

ments to contribute too much to their societies and were being given too little in return. The inter-area differences amounted to no more than variations in the intensity of these feelings.

Young people and housing

Establishing an independent household can be an important indicator of adult status. The likelihood of young people actually achieving this, however, is closely tied to housing policy and economic circumstances. Further cultural meanings and expectations towards housing of young people vary greatly in the two societies. Thus, in England owner-occupation, encouraged by a mortgage and credit boom, became predominant in the 1980s, and despite the subsequent collapse of the housing market, the ideal of 'home-ownership' was still prevalent among young people. Indeed the decline of the public rented sector meant that, apart from those going away from home to study, the alternative to getting a home of your own was seen as staying in the parental home. The contrast with young German people in attitudes towards home-ownership could not be more marked. Almost universally the alternative to staying in the parental home was seen as 'getting a flat'. Home-ownership is not even regarded as an issue at this stage: 'buying a home' was seen as what middle-aged people did when they had made their final career move.

Hence the lack of financial resources and unavailability of credit at this stage of their careers are not the only barriers to home-ownership: the geographical immobility and relative finality of house purchase were also seen as deterrents. The competition for flats was intense, and in both German towns less than one-third of the sample had moved away from home. Although staying in the parental home could mean that independence was postponed (Allerbeck and Hoag, 1985), it could also be a tactic by the young people to try and ensure that as much of their income as possible was disposable rather than committed. Even though they were living at home, the young could be seeking independence in other ways. For example, an increasing amount of their leisure time could be

spent outside the family (Kabel, Soenrichsen and Splanemann, 1987).

Thus, young German people in both towns were united in regarding home-ownership as a non-issue. In England, while young people in both towns may have aspired to home-ownership, only in Swindon was it likely to be a realistic possibility for more than a small minority of our samples. Indeed the Liverpool sample expressed greater concern about unemployment prospects; about half were 'very worried' about not having enough money. Their solution to housing problems was likely to be pragmatic: for example, in our sample as elsewhere (Rauta, 1986), there was evidence of young people living together as 'concealed households' in the same house as parents or other relatives.

In contrast, housing was seen as a major issue in Swindon, although there was a very marked differentiation between those who had already effected transitions into home-ownership and those whose pay or prospects were such that they despaired of getting a home of their own. Indeed 20 Swindon respondents made comments about what they believed should be done about housing for young people. These were sometimes general comments but there were also more detailed proposals. That housing for young people did raise strong feelings could be gauged from the following comments: 'lower cost housing for those with small incomes'; 'build more council housing and provide cheaper private housing'; 'the current government should provide more low cost or rentable accommodation'; 'young people have problems with housing around Swindon as it is so expensive, so there should be separate housing lists of reasonable prices for people of my age'; 'greater public and private money invested in low cost, long-term housing'; 'more money spent on housing on many empty and disused council houses'; 'redevelopment of old sites and improve existing conditions, without using up the countryside'. One young man, who was earning £8,600 a year, drew attention to the way that besides young people having problems if they could not get a mortgage, they could be in trouble if they had one because of the recession. Hence, the government should: 'stop selling council houses, clean up empty buildings to living standards and rent instead of wasting them and

building more rentable premises for the young who don't need a noose [mortgage] around their necks because its obvious they are going to be able to afford them because the jobs aren't there (once again) for them to earn the money'.

In both countries, however, we should take care not to assume that moving away from home is necessarily an urgent goal for young people even if they could afford to move. Not only may the quality of some parental homes delay the decision to leave home (Christoffersen, 1991), but also non-financial elements such as values, domestic services, and a caring climate (Gierveld, Liefbroer and Beekink, 1991) may all influence such decisions. The motivation to leave home before the age of 20 can itself be quite complex (Ainley, 1991).

Social relationships

We were interested in whether the more rapid progress towards employment in England would be matched in other areas of social maturation. Here our evidence is not clear cut. The Germans were actually the more politically aware, and although in certain respects the English samples were becoming socially independent of their parents at slightly younger ages on average, they were certainly not ahead by the several years that applied in entering the labour market in search of regular employment. This could link to the tendency mentioned where young people continued to live at home, but spent much of their leisure outside the family.

The samples were asked about the ages when someone of their own sex ought to embark on a list of activities from going on holiday with friends to having sex, marrying, voting in an election, holding a full-time job and driving a car. They were also asked their own ages when they had first driven a car, had sex, been on holiday without their parents, and to a rock or pop concert. On most of these items the English respondents on average had initially 'done it', and believed that it was appropriate for young people to embark on the activities, at the younger ages, but by less than a year in most instances. There was, therefore, some evidence of earlier social

maturation in England, but on all the matters explored there was a substantial overlap in the ages nominated in the two countries.

In 1991, most respondents in both countries were still living with their parents, though larger minorities in the English areas had established independent households. In both England and Germany individuals on the academic trajectory were the most likely to be living away from their parents in 1991. Except in Swindon, the majority of those living away had not established themselves in households with opposite-sex partners. Just over one-quarter of the Swindon sample had made this transition (mostly just living together rather than married) compared with around one in ten in each of the other three areas. The Swindon sample's accelerated development in this particular sphere was being permitted by the relative ease with which early school-leavers in the area could progress into employment offering adult wages.

The numbers of young people in the samples with children ranged from nil in Paderborn to six in Liverpool. Overall, early parenthood was rare among the young people in the samples, although most of the young parents were female and on the margins of the labour market. In these cases it seemed more likely that early parenthood was interfacing with young people's education and training than of individuals appearing to opt for parenthood as an alternative route to adult status. The young women in both countries were more likely than the men to be living with, married or engaged to, or going steady with opposite-sex partners. In these respects the women were ahead in social development, although the men were the younger, on average, when they first engaged in certain kinds of independent leisure such as going on holidays without their parents and drinking alcohol. Moreover, the German men's transitions were being lengthened by the requirement of national or alternative community service, which the majority of the young men in our sample had completed by 1991.

Transition processes differed in important respects for men and women. Our samples were deliberately selected so that men and women were equally represented in all the career trajectory groups. The sexes were, therefore, following 'broadly similar' routes into the labour market, but as soon as individuals' career histories were

explored in any detail it became apparent that most members of each sex were experiencing gender-typical brands of education, training and employment. For example, there were far more women than men in service occupations, and more men in manufacturing jobs. Men's training was the more likely to lead to careers with prospects, whereas the women were the more likely to end up in dead-end jobs. In terms of attitudes, the women appeared just as committed as the men to their jobs and careers in the labour market, but the women were already spending more time at home and were planning their careers taking account of current and future domestic responsibilities. These considerations were less likely to intrude into men's career planning. Also, especially in Germany, the longer male transitions were permitting 'upward drift' in expectations and prospects, while those of women were more likely to spiral downwards. It was men who were the more likely to make delayed starts to apprenticeships, to embark on further post-apprentice training to enhance their career prospects, and to return to full-time education. The women's more rapid social development was reducing their scope to use the 'moratorium period' to escape from traditional gender divisions.

The samples were asked how often they spent time with a list of possible companions, and the two most common sources of leisure time companionship in all four areas were a close friend of the opposite sex and a close friend of the same sex. Most respondents had especially close friends of both sexes with whom they appeared to spend a great deal of leisure time. These types of companionship were far more common than peer groups and other family members. By 1991, our samples had passed through the stage when leisure (for men in particular) was spent mainly in peer groups. There appeared to be no clear differences between countries or areas in typical sources of companionship until the respondents were divided by career trajectories. This showed that Germans on the academic trajectory were far more likely than other groups in their country to spend time on their own. In contrast, the academic group in England was by far the most likely to spend time with other people from their workplaces or colleges. According to this evidence, opting for the

academic route in Germany meant spending more time in solitary study or relaxation, whereas in England it meant engaging in more intensive interaction with colleagues than other contemporaries did.

Career development 1989–91

Recent trends in the local labour markets and the effects of ageing were influential on the samples' career progression. Since 1988 there had been a general movement into employment in all four areas. Swindon had the highest proportion of its sample (nearly two-thirds) in employment in 1991, reflecting the low level of unemployment in the area (compared with Liverpool) combined with the accelerated pace of English transitions. Bremen had the lowest proportion (approximately one-fifth) of its sample in full-time jobs in 1991, reflecting the previously tight labour market situation compared with Paderborn and the generally slower pace of German transitions. In both Liverpool and Paderborn roughly one-half of the samples were in employment at the time of the 1991 survey.

Among the Germans on trajectory II who had been serving firm-based apprenticeships in 1989, approximately three-fifths had progressed into full-time employment by 1991, whereas the majority of those from trajectories III and IV were still in training. German provisions for young people who failed to get on or stay on one of the main routes towards employment, either the academic route or the dual system, were slowing down their transitions to an even greater extent than was otherwise normal in their country. Eventually, however, the young people who were on trajectories III and IV in 1989 had eventually either obtained apprenticeships or settled for unskilled employment. Those who had spent considerable time trying to enter the dual system recognised that they needed to complete apprenticeships if they were to have any hope of breaking out of unskilled occupations. In the English areas the reverse had tended to apply: young people who did not proceed down the academic mainstream, into vocational education leading to respected qualifications, or into systematic training for skilled jobs be-

tween ages 16 and 18 sought and, in Swindon in particular, experienced especially rapid transitions into the labour market. Those who were unsuccessful in seeking employment after leaving school could enter Youth Training, albeit often on schemes outside the employer-led sector. Subsequently, their job prospects depended heavily on the state of their local labour markets. In 1991, across both English areas, about one-quarter of respondents from trajectories III and IV (mostly from Liverpool) were unemployed, with others likely to have had some experience of unemployment. Spells of unemployment were also likely to have been very much shorter in Swindon than Liverpool. On the lower status trajectories in England an effect of accelerated transitions was to expose the young adults to the risk of unemployment at earlier ages than in Germany where apprenticeships and schemes made it unlikely that young people would embark on 'unemployment careers' at the beginning of their working lives. On the higher status routes, the main difference in 1991 was that the English respondents were more likely to have already obtained full-time jobs; roughly nine out of every ten from trajectory II had done so compared with six out of ten in Germany, and whereas nearly two-thirds of the Germans on the academic route expected to be still in full-time education for at least another year, only one-quarter of those from the same route in England anticipated still being students at that stage.

Not only were considerably more young people from the German samples still in education and training, but also some of those in employment were not well paid. They were doing unskilled work or had completed apprenticeships in areas with poor pay and prospects. Entrants to the more highly skilled trades tend to be older and have a longer period of training and so have still not fully qualified. At the time of this survey only six German respondents, then aged 21–22, had incomes of more than £120 per week, whereas thirteen from Liverpool and twenty-four from Swindon exceeded this figure. The financial advantages of the English respondents over their German counterparts were considerable. English school-leavers, in practice mainly from Swindon, who made speedy transitions into regular employment, had been well paid from the outset. One Swindon teenager had been earning a total of

£600 per month from her full-time job as a leisure centre attendant plus a part-time job as a hairdresser at age 19. Another young hairdresser employed in the same salon earned £300 per month. A teenage electrician in Swindon earned £175 per week, a 17-year-old apprentice cabinet-maker earned £112, an apprentice fitter £80, a 17-year-old clerk £85 and a secretary £101. Such wages were far more easily obtained in Swindon than in Liverpool. Needless to say, the figures looked astronomic compared with the incomes of same-aged young people on training rates of say £40–60 per week in Germany. These differentials had been largely maintained through to ages 21–22, although it was noticeable that in England only the highly skilled were earning more than £150 per week. That is, those who had been earning 'good money' in unskilled employment had in some cases subsequently lost their jobs and in other cases had now been passed by those with more skills and qualifications. The comparatively high earnings when young could be seen as a compensation for much more limited longer-term prospects. The young people in Swindon tended to be satisfied with their earnings, while those in Liverpool were much more likely to be dissatisfied than their German counterparts with their income. This was explicable in that young people in Germany had far fewer expectations of financial independence by the age of 21–22, and in most cases their longer-term prospects were much brighter.

The English respondents were earning more on average and were also the more likely to have already borrowed money by 1991, especially to purchase motor vehicles in Swindon, but more often to obtain clothes and holidays in Liverpool. Furthermore, the English samples were the more likely to anticipate borrowing in the future. Nearly three-quarters expected to borrow for housing and just over one-half to purchase vehicles. One-quarter of the samples in both Swindon and Liverpool also envisaged borrowing in order to establish their own businesses at some time in the future. The English samples had often already learned how to obtain and use credit. During the 1980s, young people in Britain were tempted with offers of easy credit by financial institutions and retailers. Banks competed for students' accounts with offers of free banking and cheap loans. The wide use and acceptance of credit by the English samples in

their teenage years reflects a deep cultural difference between the two societies. The use of credit is much rarer even for adults in Germany and then likely to be restricted just to major purchases and to be accompanied by a substantial deposit. It would be exceptional for a young person to be able to obtain credit. As we highlighted previously, borrowing money for housing is extremely unlikely for virtually everyone under the age of 30. Similarly, young people rarely try to borrow money to buy cars, clothes and holidays and even if they did, they would almost certainly be refused by banks; other organisations do not offer credit. Credit card companies would not entertain applications from young people without a high level of regular income. The banks even control the number of cheques they issue to young people. Overall, young people in Germany can spend money only after they have earned it, with almost the sole exception being money given by or borrowed from parents. The much freer attitudes to credit in England perhaps being mirrored in the introduction of training credits, especially where their introduction in pilot areas had been trailed as the use of vouchers or credit cards for buying education and training.

Apart from transitions being accelerated in England, the other major cross-national differences in the samples' career experiences noted in 1989 were that all the routes towards employment in Germany tended to be more structured, with prescribed skills that had to be acquired and tests that had to be passed, and more firmly bounded with fewer possibilities or switching between jobs, training and education without starting again. These differences were confirmed in the 1991 survey, in that by then nearly three-quarters of the Bremen and Paderborn samples had entered (and sometimes completed) formal apprentice training, compared with only around one-in-five in Liverpool and Swindon. Also, nearly one-half of the Bremen sample and just over three-quarters in Paderborn had already achieved vocational qualifications compared with only one-in-seven in Liverpool and Swindon. The greater tendency of the English samples to 'move around' was confirmed in that just over one-quarter from each of the German areas compared with over two-thirds in Swindon (though only one-in-three in Liverpool) had already held more than one full-time job. Where employment had

been fairly easily obtained, as in Swindon, many of the young English adults had already accumulated quite varied occupational experience.

When the samples were aged 16–19, the more structured and clearly bounded German routes into the labour market seemed to be making transitions more rigid than in England. Where young people sought to change direction, then even aged 21–22 in Germany they had to 'start again'. Some respondents had done this by the time of our 1991 survey, particularly those on schemes in both Bremen and Paderborn who had still wanted to enter the dual system. Also, some individuals who had started training for one occupation in which the prospects were poor embarked subsequently on another apprenticeship which, they hoped, would open up better prospects. However, others were daunted by the prospects of starting again and so they felt that they were 'locked in' and had no alternative but to complete unsatisfactory apprenticeships or vocational courses, as they had room to manoeuvre only if they started completely again (on an initial training rate of perhaps £40 per week). Full-time vocational education in Germany until 18 or 19 could be a prelude to employer-based training, whereas in England it was more likely to be instead of such training. Thus in England, if 16- and 17-year-old school-leavers did not obtain systematic employer-based training very quickly, it was unlikely that they would ever receive such vocational preparation. The relatively extended German transitions, fixed routes and formal training contracts allow 16–19 year olds less scope to switch positions in the short term but, in the longer run, provided people are willing to wait or start again, then they seemed to be conferring the greater scope for individuals to control their own career development and, in this sense, to construct individualised biographies. The English teenagers' scope for choice in their first few years of employment would, if successful, be less likely to lead to individuals changing the longer-term career trajectories, without their hazarding those rewards. Hence, for those who had made a successful entry into employment, then their occupation at 18 or 19 was likely to be a predictor of what they were doing at age 21 or 22, although they may have been promoted in their field.

The greater labour market experience of the English samples was reflected in the relatively high proportions who had used virtually all job-finding methods. The Liverpool sample had particularly wide-ranging experience on account of the efforts that individuals had often needed to make, not always successfully even in the end, when seeking work; whereas those from Swindon were aware that until late 1990 a wide array of employment opportunities were available, and that for many it was not too difficult to envisage or effect a change of job.

Overall levels of satisfaction with their lives were higher in Swindon than in Liverpool. Its young adults were more likely than those in any other area to express satisfaction with their work, job training, incomes, standards of living and leisure. Between ages 16 and 19, the Liverpool samples had expressed more satisfaction with their leisure, and were more likely to regard their city as a good place to live on account of the opportunities to 'go out' for a good time than the Swindon respondents, some of whom, in interviews, complained that their town lacked leisure facilities and was boring. By age 21–22, however, when the present inquiry was conducted, the Swindon sample was expressing the greater leisure satisfaction. A large leisure complex had opened but more likely they were beginning to reap the full rewards of their better opportunities to obtain employment, decent incomes, and therefore, to spend and consume. There were also social maturation effects, with two of the samples already complaining about the behaviour of younger people. One complained of under-age people in nightclubs, while the other thought there should be 'more recreational places for people aged 16–18, as of a weekend they have nowhere to go, so they become bored, and usually cause trouble'. Swindon comprises distinct areas and outlying villages, which means that there is not a single 'Swindon experience'. So for most young people, having had a relatively high degree of occupational choice and leisure mobility, together with more geographical mobility in the sense of moving away from home, than in other areas, it was perhaps more likely that they could construct a lifestyle with which they were more or less fully satisfied. Thus, a number of people pointed to problems with social life in different parts of Swindon, but also said it did not affect

them. This would accord well with the view of Bassett et al. (1990) that 'in social and cultural terms the town has become increasingly fragmented and complex'. One young man, however, did feel constrained not to go drinking with friends outside their immediate area, because of the possibility of 'trouble'. Those who had gone into higher education, especially in big cities, were sometimes critical of the social values and perceived lack of culture in Swindon. In contrast, some of the young people in Liverpool complained not of the lack of leisure facilities, but sometimes the way their lack of resources, and high transport costs, locked them into much smaller localities in which there was relatively little to do. The Swindon respondents outscored the Liverpool sample on all the satisfaction measurements, whereas in Germany there was no clear difference between Bremen and Paderborn, except that in the latter area the respondents were more satisfied with their future prospects. The absence of any other differences between Bremen and Paderborn is likely to have been due to the more structured German transitions shielding young people from local labour market effects, pleasant or adverse, whereas in England beginning workers were far more exposed to local market forces.

There was no clear inter-country difference on these questions, except that the English samples were the more satisfied within their home lives. It was only in Swindon (but not in Liverpool) where the faster English transitions, and the generally higher earned incomes that were being obtained, were leading to greater satisfaction with the respondents' standards of living and leisure. With their higher earnings and levels of borrowing, the English samples had much higher personal disposable incomes but this was not leading to equally greater all-round satisfaction with their incomes, standards of living or leisure activities. This was because all the samples' reference groups were local. In Germany, apprentices had been paid training allowances for generations and the apprentices in this study assessed the adequacy of their own incomes by making comparisons not with adult earnings but with other apprentices' allowances and their own situations when still at school.

> The training allowances in insurance are fairly good. I've never thought about the allowance before. Maybe this is because I never earned so much money before. At the moment it's a lot of money for me though you couldn't feed a whole family on it. I think it's OK. I have the advantages in the situation. The company pays for school and the workshop. We seldom earn money for the company even when we're in production. Apprentices can be satisfied with what they get. We have just had a pay rise. Before then the pay was not very good. Compared with apprentices in other banks we used to get a lot less.

The English youth on schemes or the unemployed group were rarely satisfied with their incomes because they felt that, at their ages, they ought to be wage-earning. Even individuals in employment were sometimes dissatisfied when they felt that they were low paid compared with other workers of their age, or in similar occupations. However, the majority of those who were approaching or on full adult rates at age 21–22 were satisfied with their money. Most such respondents were in Swindon. Irrespective of where they lived, the English respondents were mostly confident and satisfied with themselves, but whether they were satisfied with their lives depended on their local opportunities.

Conclusions

Our previous study (Bynner and Roberts, 1991) highlighted the extended transitions of young German people into employment, and the accelerated transitions of young English people meant that the patterns of experience at age 19–20 were often quite sharply different. With the passage of two more years these differences lessened considerably for most of our samples outside academic routes, given the greater exposure to work or training at work. However, most young German people who had entered higher education were still some way off graduation at age 22, whereas their English counterparts had often completed their studies and were now in work. Elsewhere, nearly all young people now had meaningful experience of work. Other significant differences, how-

ever, had been reinforced, most notably in attitudes towards training and experience.

Most of the German sample (which it should be remembered was selected, not representative, and as such greatly over-represented those who had started outside firm-based training routes) had obtained or were still in the process of gaining substantive vocational qualifications, compared to a minority of the English sample. The young German people were still in the main following clearly bounded routes into the labour market. However, as significant numbers of young people had not either completed their transition into skilled employment or given up hope of yet doing so, it was difficult to say much about their longer-term prospects in aggregate, with the important exception of marked gender inequalities, which will be more fully discussed in chapter III. Most were likely to be relatively successful but for many others the final outcome was still unclear. The provisional nature of such judgements was reinforced by the widespread perception among young people, as well as in the wider population, that one becomes a fully skilled worker only several years after completing apprenticeship. The contrast with the English sample was marked. Reasonably final judgements about the success of transitions could be made in all cases. The outcome of skilled or other training, whether at work, in college, on schemes or in some combination of all three, could be measured against subsequent experience in the labour market. Those who had been highly successful, relatively successful or unsuccessful could usually be clearly differentiated; with the only doubts coming from a mismatch between current qualifications and a change in the labour market. Hence, some graduates from both places, and a few with relatively high-level vocational qualifications in Liverpool, were still seeking permanent skilled employment, and could still be reasonably optimistic if and when labour market conditions eased. The converse were the cases of young people in Swindon who had found relatively well-paid employment without qualifications, who found their successful transitions were abrogated when they were made redundant and were unable to find other employment.

The longer German transitions, and lower initial earnings, circumscribed the chances of becoming financially and geographically independent. Indeed, the lack of access of young people to credit closed off the possibility of any external finance. The only comparative advantage was that the absence of any tradition of an inflationary house market meant that there was no pressure at all to get on a 'housing ladder' at a young age. The only alternative to living at home was 'getting a flat', and many young people recognised that by staying at home they could maximise their disposable income. The widespread cultural expectation that until at least their early 20s young people should be in education or training meant that there was relatively little expressed dissatisfaction, with mainly modest incomes. Even where there was dissatisfaction this was less likely to relate to the absolute level of income, but rather where the value of training and income combined was deemed too low. Financial independence from the family in England seems much easier to achieve. Higher earnings, credit easily available in a number of forms, and cultural expectations that young people should be significant consumers (and earners) all lead in that direction. In practice, a depressed labour market like Liverpool resulted in the majority of our sample being dissatisfied with their level of income. Even in Swindon, those in well-paid skilled employment could face a dilemma. To own a home of their own was feasible, but mortgage costs were such that this greatly reduced their disposable income. Certainly, housing issues loomed large in the consciousness of young people in Swindon.

The local and national contexts for becoming adult in the four towns were therefore sharply different in important respects. However, they seemed to make relatively little difference towards the speed of social maturation. That is, the aggregate differences between the way that young people took on adult statuses in the two countries appeared minimal. This could be because the underlying processes are basically similar or alternatively because the speeds, processes and pathways to becoming adult within the national (or even local) contexts are diverse. Perhaps an investigation of the behaviour of groups in broadly matched contexts will be more revealing. This is the avenue that we shall explore in later chapters.

CHAPTER III

Gender and transition

Introduction

Gender influences young people's identities and transitions in a number of respects. First, the different location of young men and young women with respect to the education and labour markets opens or circumscribes various options. Second, different domestic situations will also influence young people's perception of identity and transition. In this chapter we shall consider the ways in which young women and men are situated within the German and English education and training systems and the implications that this has for their work careers and identities. Each aspect is considered in turn: identities and transitions first in work and then in the domestic sphere. Since the relationship between gender and transitions to work represents an important dimension of social justice and individual development, we open this chapter with a more general discussion.

Work transitions

Research has demonstrated that the anticipatory socialisation of young men and women in the education systems of both Britain and Germany channels them into 'female' and 'male' subjects which in turn lead to various career options in the labour market (Griffin, 1985; Heinz et al., 1987; Wallace, 1987). Studies carried out in Britain have indicated that work was highly gendered and that young men and women entered different sectors of the labour market. The more qualified minimum-age female school-leavers entered clerical work, while shop and distributive work absorbed a large proportion and others entered unskilled assembly work (Ashton and Maguire, 1980; Youthaid, 1981). Even amongst the most qualified who graduated from higher education, young women were more likely to pursue particular subject disciplines, which in turn led to 'female' professions or to find themselves on the lower rungs

of other professions (Deem, 1978; 1980). The kinds of jobs undertaken by young women often resembled the roles which they undertook at home – serving and helping others.

The labour market transitions of young women are also shaped by their own preferences and by what those around them – such as their parents – consider to be a 'nice job for a girl' (Sharpe, 1976). While some have argued that young women adjust their expectations to opportunities in the labour market (Youthaid, 1981), others found that young women preferred unrealistically 'glamorous' jobs such as becoming air hostesses or beauticians and that they later had to adjust their expectations (Sharpe, 1976). Such jobs, along with clerical work, can appear to offer opportunities for upward mobility without the necessity of extended study for qualifications. However, such jobs also depended upon adopting or reinforcing a traditional feminine role.

However, this research was undertaken in Britain before the introduction of extensive training schemes. At that time the majority of young people left school at the minimum age to go straight into work, so that it was the allocating mechanisms of the labour market which directly determined their job entry and subsequent career (Roberts, 1968). Training schemes were introduced in Britain in the 1980s and they were intended to provide equality of opportunity for girls. In fact they tended to reflect, rather than overcome, these more general differences in the division of labour (Griffin, 1985; Wallace, 1987). Girls were concentrated in a small range of schemes – three out of the seven occupational training families – so that, for example, the group 'Installation, maintenance and repair' was 96% male while 'Community, health and social services' was 86% female (Cockburn, 1987). Furthermore, Stafford's study (1991) demonstrates how difficult it was for a young woman to survive on a male-dominated scheme. She could do this only by rejecting many aspects of her femininity and this she found difficult to do. It would therefore appear that rather than overcoming inequalities in the labour market, the training schemes seemed to reproduce them or even to filter young people into gendered jobs through counselling or work experience.

In Germany, the training system has been established for far longer and yet there are similar systematic asymmetries. Girls were less likely to find apprenticeship training (Heinz et al., 1987) and two-thirds of girls were concentrated into just a few of the hundreds of apprenticeship careers – mainly in retail, clerical, social care, catering, health and hairdressing training (*Sechster Jugendbericht*: BMJFG, 1984). The schemes associated with girls are more likely to last two rather than three years and to lead to lower status, and lower-paid jobs (Mayer et al., 1983). Even in terms of apprenticeship pay, the Mayer et al. study found that girls fared worse, receiving only about one-third to one-half of that found in male-dominated training schemes. However, structural gender differences did not just emerge in the 'dual' apprenticeship system described above: they were an integral part of the structure of education and training more generally. Krüger (1[illegible]has argued that in fact only a minority of girls go into the dual apprenticeship system; the majority stay in the educational system. Here they are found more often in what she terms the 'moratorium' sector, taking vocational preparation courses of various kinds, or in the vocational schools training for careers through education rather than through apprenticeships. Young men by contrast are more likely to take up apprenticeships in the dual system or, to a lesser extent, to go through the full-time vocational schools. Young women in Germany were also more likely to be staying at school to take academic qualifications, as they were in Britain. However, Krüger (1989) argues that this greater educational orientation on the part of young women does not necessarily advantage them in the labour market. The courses which they undertake in the 'moratorium' or vocational school system lead to feminine professions and no clear vocational end goal. It is also a longer process. Thus, Krüger maintains that although young women invest more of their own time and effort into preparing themselves for work than do young men, they have less secure occupational outcomes.

Thus, in both countries there were differences of gender in terms of work and training, which, despite the different training and educational systems, are quite similar in their consequences. To explain this we therefore need to look beyond the training system

itself and towards more general structuring factors. The strong revival of a domestic ideology based upon consumerism and full male employment followed the Second World War in both countries, but married women increasingly participated in the labour force from the 1960s onwards until in both Britain and Germany they now constitute a substantial proportion of all workers. However, in times of recession their situation in the two countries differs. Esping-Anderson (1990) argues that one way in which Germany weathered unemployment was to encourage women to stay at home by reinforcing the family as well as by extending the education and training system. By keeping young people off, and removing workers from the labour market, rising unemployment could be diluted or avoided. This has implications for the expectations and experiences of young women. In Britain, on the other hand, the increase in the availability of part-time work has created opportunities for women in the secondary labour market such that in some areas it is easier for them to find jobs than it is for men (Beechey and Perkins, 1986). Britain's labour market depends to a great extent upon the low-paid, flexible source of labour provided by women.

Both countries have seen the extension and lengthening of the youth phase since the mid-1970s; this is more marked in Germany than in Britain (Bynner and Roberts, 1991; Wallace, 1991) as our first study shows. In all western countries, young women have had shortened careers compared with men – they get married and become parents earlier – but a further factor in Germany is that young men undertake up to 18 months national or community service, which young women do not have to do. This extends an already long transition still further for young men. What implications does this have for the gender roles which we are exploring? What forms does patriarchal ideology take within the two systems?

One answer to these questions is provided by Juergen Zinneker, who has argued that the extensive 'underemployment' of young people in education and training leads to a weakening of traditional gender roles:

> Hence, present day youth is playing a leading role in dismantling gender polarisation which has evolved historically since

> industrialisation. The more extended the youth and post-adolescent moratorium becomes, the more insistently does this phase of life weaken the gendered division of labour and its corresponding psychology in subsequent life. This trend will inevitably lead to a weakening of gender polarisation over the whole life-cycle. It is girls and young women who will especially profit from the extension of the youth and post-adolescent phase – they gain in life perspective and room for manoeuvre. In contrast boys and young men will find it difficult to come to terms with the crisis of the employment society, since their gender identity is so firmly anchored in a life-long paid work role. Having to juggle the demands of housework and childcare, flexible underemployment and full-time paid employment is closer to the life-course traditions and experiences of women. (Zinneker 1990: 32)

Zinneker's hypothesis stems from debates in German educational sociology where it is argued that young women have become more career-oriented and this is reflected in their improved performance in education as well as in their attitudes. It is assumed that they have thus become more 'individualised' in their choices and aspirations, choosing between work and family and between different kinds of work to make a career for themselves. The surveys by Zinneker and others seem to give some indication that young men by contrast are seeking personally meaningful work roles instead of a formalised employment career. They too are becoming individualised not only on account of the increasing opportunities but also because of the risks and uncertainties embodied in the education and training system of the 1980s and 1990s. Individualisation, it is argued, affects young women in particular because they have real choices between family and paid employment for the first time and opportunities to combine the two. We have assumed that there are two different strands to the 'individualisation' thesis: the optimistic strand, which claims that increasing opportunities represent increasing choices and the pessimistic strand, which emphasises instead the risk and uncertainty which is thereby introduced. This is not to say that we can underestimate the effect of structural constraints,

such as class reproduction and it is not certain how far this can be applied in England (see Jones and Wallace, 1990; 1992).

Work roles and domestic roles

The tendency of married women to work for most of their lives has been accompanied by changes in the family, such as the contraction of the childcaring years, the increase in single parenthood and falling family size. These factors all mean that it is increasingly common for women to combine work with domestic roles. In this respect we can see perhaps a shift in the pattern of expectations between different generations of women. A large-scale survey by Zinneker and Fuchs (1981) found that young women were often as ambitious about their careers as young men. They wanted careers as well as families for themselves and did not envisage spending their whole lives on '*Kinder, Küche, Kirche*'. The 'normal biography' for the older generation of women has been conceptualised as being a 'three-phase model'. This begins with training and a short period in the labour market, is followed by a period as a housewife while children are small, and then once more a labour market participation is resumed. However, more recent work by Krüger (1991) has indicated that even for the older generation of women this represents an ideal rather than a reality: women may perceive themselves as having careers dominated at least in part by domestic responsibilities, but they in fact spend most of their lives in the labour market. The younger generation of women do not always accept this 'three-phase model' in any case, preferring to intertwine their work and domestic responsibilities rather than take a long break.

It is likely that these changing expectations of young women are in conflict with the expectations of those around them: a number of British surveys have found that while young women are more likely to favour greater opportunities and equal training for women along with increasingly shared responsibility for the domestic sphere, young men have more traditional orientations (Wallace, 1987; Wallace, Dunkerley and Cheal, 1991). In our survey these results were reinforced with 73 of the 80 female respondents answering

that they felt that improving opportunities for women was 'quite important' or 'very important', while 53 of the 78 young men did.

These changing and conflicting role expectations lead to a certain tension and ambiguity for young women: they are expected to be both wives and mothers and to be employees and to have careers. The development of the training and education system as it is experienced by the generation of young people whom we have interviewed, encourages them to think in terms of 'careers' and professions which carry implications for their identities. They are encouraged to make decisions about training, about what they really feel they are suited for and to think about their future plans in terms of these career directions. The German system in particular encourages this. Although this may be an ideological illusion in labour markets where they are forced to fit the jobs available, as Roberts (1984) elsewhere has argued, the idea to build a career or vocation was nevertheless an important one which emerged in the interviews. Whereas 'careers' are constructed in the masculine world of employment, they take no account of domestic circumstances. They assume rational values of work and commitment and they involve an orientation which is supposed to extend throughout life. Training and apprenticeship schemes formally embody such values. However, there are also careers where feminine roles have become institutionalised, where servicing, caring or 'looking good' are part of the requirements for the job and here a model of femininity is constructed within the public sphere of work. But, it may not always be easy for young women to fit these models. Given a situation where women do expect 'careers' of some sort, how is it possible to fit this together with other life commitments, especially domestic ones, and how do young women orientate themselves towards these roles? How do young men fit their 'careers' with other life expectations?

We assume that extension and differentiation in education and training may lead to greater possibilities for 'individualisation' for young women. The fact that young women remain in education for longer, where their qualifications up until school-leaving often exceed those of their male peers, and the fact that domestic responsibilities may exert less of a pressure than previously, mean that

young women may have similarly 'successful', 'damaged', 're-paired' or 'stagnant' careers as young men. To take advantage of an increased scope of options for individualisation, however, is more difficult for young women because of pressures of family-oriented socialisation. Involvement in domestic work affects young women before they get married or leave home as well as afterwards. Studies which have explored this in the UK found that girls are consistently more likely to be doing domestic work while they are at school or in training than young men and that this may even interfere with their work prospects (Griffin, 1985; Finn, 1987; Wallace, 1987). This was more often the case with working-class girls than with middle-class girls. Are young women doing more domestic labour in both Britain and Germany and how does this affect their sense of identity and life-goals?

Education, training and employment

The methodology of our study enables us to explore the differences between similar groups of men and women in Germany and in Britain respectively. While the statistical results cannot be taken as representative in any respect, they show that some of the trends identified in other studies were also at work in our survey. First, the division between industrial sectors was evident, with nearly all of the employed women working in the service industries as compared with about half of the men. Second, more men than women had undertaken apprenticeships – 51% as against 36%. Young women were also more likely to be doing pre-vocational courses such as Youth Training Schemes (YTS) and Employment Training (ET) schemes (and their equivalent in Germany). Girls were also more likely to stay full time in the education system for longer periods than young men. How does this affect the way in which they perceive and pursue their pathways through education and training?

Extended education

The increasing opportunities for young women were reflected in the fact that we had several examples of young women who started their transition from trajectory 1 (in higher education). *Cathy* from Liver-

pool, for example, had taken a degree course in English and had then undergone teacher training to become a primary school teacher. She claimed to have always wanted to be a teacher – 'to be honest I cannot think of a time when I didn't want to be a teacher' – and she saw this as a 'natural progression'. In her experiences on a teacher-training course she found that she liked the younger children much more and would prefer to specialise in this typically female area of teaching. She saw herself as a career teacher, moving up the professional scale and perhaps later going into educational psychology. For *Cathy*, a career orientation and a female orientation were compatible because she moved into a female profession. Although she saw her motivations as inner-directed, in fact the degree subject and the choice of career represented very typical female options.

Laura did not study a 'typical female' subject: she took a degree in 'international business studies', which included a year abroad. Although this seems a very ambitious and masculine-type career, the interview revealed that she felt very uncertain about what she wanted because her father had pressurised her into doing a degree and she 'wanted to keep my options open'. However, having finished her degree, she found that there was no job for her in a depressed labour market like Liverpool and her applications had all been rejected. Furthermore, she felt stigmatised coming from Liverpool as her accent sounded 'common' to others. She could probably find a job if she was prepared to move elsewhere, however, she felt ambivalent about this because her class origins made her feel more at home in Liverpool and because her boy-friend, who was a taxi-driver, was reluctant to leave Liverpool. While she wanted to stay with him, she would be bored being just a housewife and also wanted a job. She was therefore faced with the dilemma of pursuing a career and losing her boy-friend and community or staying in Liverpool and sacrificing a career, although she may eventually find a lower-status job. In the case of *Laura*, her career aspirations and her female identity have come into acute conflict. Whereas for *Cathy* the resolution was to find a female profession, *Laura's* training did not point her so easily in that direction. Those young people coming from Swindon had much better prospects on graduating from university and were more likely to have 'successful' careers.

Both men and women were able to find jobs in the service sector industries, which greatly improved their confidence and commitment to careers.

In Germany, we had only one girl, *Gisela*, with a good *Abitur* in our qualitative sample. However, rather than pursuing a university degree, she had decided to undertake training in physiotherapy instead – a typical female profession. She was totally committed to this career and enjoyed her training very much. Like *Cathy*, she enjoyed helping her charges and watching them improve. Physiotherapy enabled her to combine her sporting hobbies with her professional interest. In this case, this respondent had found a profession in which she could both pursue a career and live out a feminine identity.

If we now turn to some examples of young men who left higher education, we find no such conflict between career and gender socialisation. However, what we do find in some cases is an uncertainty about future directions. Male careers involve being primarily work-oriented and yet these young men could not always decide which work they wanted to do. *John* was a young man from Liverpool studying social and industrial studies. By his own admission he was lazy and took the subject only because it seemed easy. He had no specific career plans apart from wanting an interesting job and did not know what he wanted to do next.

Steve from Liverpool studied public policy, after several course changes, at Leeds Polytechnic. After finishing his studies he decided to travel the world with a friend for a year but returned after three months unable to find work abroad as he had not obtained the right visas first. He held a six-month job as a finance worker but left that, and at the time of interview was helping out in his father's carpentry business but was technically unemployed. His main problem was that he did not really know what career he wanted to pursue, although he has considered finance and accounting or journalism. His main concern was to find an interesting job. While he enjoyed working with his father, he would still like to travel. This contrasted with the far more single-minded career orientation of young men from Swindon, who were able to pursue their occupational goals in what at the time was an expanding labour market.

Among the young German men, *Axel* was the most clearly academic in his career path. He was studying electrotechnics at university. After high achievement at school and at university at the time of interview he was in his eighth semester and would like to slow down a little to allow more time for his other interests, that is, his involvement in university societies and to give himself some time to find a girl-friend. Other young men in Germany were less single-minded in their pursuit of academic qualifications. *Torsten*, for example, began at *Realschule*, worked as a technical informatics assistant, went to *Fachoberschule* to obtain university entrance qualifications, did community service working with mentally handicapped children and (at the time of interview) wanted to go to university and study informatics or psychology. He was one example of several where there has been an 'upward drift' in career. Beginning in one trajectory, young men in Germany are able to take advantage of various training and educational opportunities to improve their prospects as they go along and might finally move into university after having begun a number of other forms of training. Both of these young men were studying 'male' subjects for at least part of their careers and neither of them seemed to feel that spending some time doing other things was particularly a problem. The German training and education system certainly seems to allow this space for a 'moratorium' for experimenting and finding a career from a range of options, but at least in these examples it allows this only for young men. If they take advantage of the longer period of education in Germany, however, young women in Germany again are restricted to only some 'female' fields of study. In England there were more examples of young women studying for a degree, which had a shorter duration.

Thus, it would appear that while there was a potential for individualisation offered by the protracted educational and training system, and young women did indeed talk in terms of their 'careers' and the choices they made, in practice the longer transition system in Germany does not seem to work as effectively in filtering young women's aspirations upwards, at least in the labour markets we studied. In Germany they appear to be more likely to think in terms of a female profession than they do in England. The many choices

and complex support systems in Germany could operate as an extended 'cooling out' and filtering process as well as one which provided greater opportunities.

Training and employment

In trajectory II, typical female careers with training leading towards a skill include clerical work and hairdressing and the survey contained several examples of girls pursuing this. *Tracy* from Liverpool started doing clerical work on a YTS scheme because

> the only thing I was good at in school was English and typing so it had to be something like that. So that's what I went in for

She had done this job for five years and although she feels that it was unstimulating and low paid, she was afraid to lose her job and be unemployed because her family depended upon her wages. She was keen to have a job with more prospects but could envisage this only in another female career – as a bank clerk.

Judy worked in hairdressing. She also started in a YTS scheme and worked at a local shop where she felt exploited and had few prospects. She carried on working there because she was afraid to lose her job. However, she felt that hairdressing was what she had always wanted to do – it was just that this particular job does not offer her enough prospects. Both these are examples of 'female' professions. These young women clearly had considerable commitment to work and to their chosen 'careers' but felt frustrated in their particular jobs. They were in 'stagnant' careers. In Swindon, however, there were more positive examples of 'successful' and 'repaired' careers (see chapter VIII). One young woman employed as a mobile hairdresser had set up her own business with considerable support from her husband, and another actually improved her job prospects after being made redundant from British Rail. Although her new firm was also threatening redundancies, the training she had received in word processing and receptionist work left her feeling quite positive.

The young German women had similarly female skilled careers. After leaving *Realschule*, *Doris* could not find a training place in an

office and so she went to higher commercial school (*Höhere Handelsschule*). After many applications she found a job at a wholesale firm for electrical and domestic appliances. After completing her examination in 1992, she hoped to go on to another firm or perhaps to study more. She was happy doing office work; *Doris* had experimented with the idea of a number of different clerical careers. For *Doris*, as for most of the others, the important thing was that the job was interesting and would involve communicating with people; where she enjoys the job, she also puts her commitment to it. Although *Doris* earned less than *Tracy*, she was better off due to parental support and a great deal more optimistic about her prospects. Like all the others in the sample, she sought a career which would provide her with a positive identity and a sense of engagement.

Katrin in Germany was also a hairdresser. She trained in a local hairdresser's salon but then changed to another where she thought her prospects were better. However, she felt that this second salon treated her badly and so she left. She was unemployed at the time of the interview but working casually to earn some extra money. She could not continue in hairdressing due to a skin allergy and a bad knee. She would like to retrain as an office worker but was not sure that she was sufficiently qualified. Unlike hairdressers in Swindon, *Katrin* did not feel that she had the option to become self-employed; in this she may have been blocked by the *Meister* system, which requires more extended qualifications before someone can set up in business.

However, the person with the most strong career orientation in our sample of women was *Christiane* from Germany, who claimed to have wanted to be a nurse from the age of five. She emphasised the feminine aspects of this career – caring for people and helping others – but she had a strong career orientation at the same time towards training and improving her professional prospects. However, she had no interest in other typically 'female' professions and would have preferred some sort of craft training if she could not become a nurse:

> Yes then, perhaps I could have done something or other with Electrics or something ... but otherwise, certainly not a 'typical women's profession', rather I would have become something like carpenter or a builder, but something in an office or as a saleslady – never.

Turning to the young men, we find that they pursue typically 'male' careers in skilled training. *William* from Liverpool, for example, left school and worked at first repairing television sets but left that job and was unemployed, then worked at a factory for a while before finding a place on an Employment Training scheme, which he also left. He finally found a position as an electrician's apprentice and after completing his training hoped to become self-employed. He was committed to the work, particularly because the prospects are good: 'Because everyone, wherever, is looking for electricians like me, in every city in every country'. This job led to more money and prospects later on.

Michael began as a transport clerk but after the reorganisation of the city council was moved into civil engineering, where he is pursuing his training. For him this was a step up and offered many future attractive career prospects. In Swindon, another respondent was determined from the outset to become an HGV (heavy goods vehicle) lorry driver and had geared his whole career towards doing this. At 21 he appears so far to have been successful, working his way up through different licences; his marriage has not hinded his ambitions.

Among the young German men, *Steffen* wanted to be a cook: for him, his career came first. Having begun a career by doing an apprenticeship, he then did his community service and at the time of interview was planning to enter *Fachoberschule* to improve his prospects for higher education. He worked at various local hotels to make some extra money, but saw this period of study and part-time jobbing as being worthwhile in the long run.

The men with training appeared to be in a different situation from the women. Both men and women had a commitment to finding an interesting job, but the women's training, with some exceptions, seemed to lead to 'dead-end' jobs or frequently 'stag-

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nant' careers in this sample, whereas the men's training seems to have opened up prospects for the trainees. In Germany, young men who had pursued training seemed to be able to move relatively easily across into higher education, whereas this was not the case amongst any of our respondents in Britain, where a more elitist system of higher education prevails. In Britain, those in the prosperous labour markets are better able to pursue upwardly mobile training; this appears to have less effect in Germany on account of the extended support which young people received in the training system. The men's training in our sample seems to be less intrinsically disappointing and also offers more opportunities for progression later; it certainly leads to much higher-paid jobs. Like the young English men, those from Germany seemed to have longer and better prospects in skilled training. They felt optimistic at this stage about their prospects. The one exception was *Christiane*, with a career in nursing, since this does appear at this stage to be more progressive than other female careers. However, in the long run it is not. In Germany, the nursing profession is structured so that it does not lead to higher or management positions or into extended education like other professions: it is deliberately constructed as a dead-end career. This is in order to discourage women from leaving the home indefinitely.

There is therefore some evidence of active 'individualisation' for young men working their way through a complex training and education system in such a way that they are able to improve their prospects, although in Britain this depends more upon the nature of the local labour market. However, for young women, getting on and off the 'training carousel', as Krüger (1990) calls it, has a tendency to filter their choices into more stagnant careers, ones with fewer future prospects. This is, if anything, more apparent in the more structured German system than in England, direct contact with the labour market, the vicissitudes of firms and greater possibilities for self-employment at a younger age all create the possibility of at least limited improvement for some.

Intermittent work and unemployment

Unskilled and unemployed people are over-represented in Liverpool. Of the girls, *Linda* and *Lynne* provide examples. *Linda* lived in a rough area of Liverpool which counted against her when she applied for jobs. She gained little from her schooling and when she left she got a job in McDonalds, but left that when they did not pay her any money. She worked in a garage and as a chambermaid, but at the time of interview she was unemployed. She would like the kind of job that she had when working in a garage by preference, because it was interesting, involved working with people and provided her with enough money to live. Like most in the sample she wanted an interesting job and one which involved contact with people. *Lynne* also lived in a depressed area of Liverpool and has undertaken five various training schemes. She left these either because she felt that the training was not offering anything or because she was sacked. She was very certain, however, that she wanted a good job and was intending to enrol back in college in order to obtain more qualifications and improve her prospects. However, at the time of the interview she was unemployed. In Swindon, the more buoyant labour market offers even the less skilled employees more job security. Although they may not necessarily see their jobs as 'careers' or be particularly keen on them, they nevertheless have a secure post and do not appear to suffer the same hardship and hopelessness as those we interviewed in Liverpool.

Turning to the equivalent respondents in Germany, *Conni* came from an unsettled home background which had served to disturb her work career. She wanted above all to work with animals, but this was a rather unrealistic dream given that she had a skin allergy which disqualified her from many careers. She worked at first in a butcher's shop but was upset by the blood and left. She then went back to vocational school and learned first home economics and then social care. However, she most enjoyed working in an office on a training scheme, and the atmosphere is particularly important for her to enjoy her work. Since she was very unhappy at home, an interesting job is particularly important for her. *Katrin* had done a variety of training schemes – hairdresser, carpenter, salesperson –

but ended up working in an unskilled capacity in a coffee warehouse. Although she trained for a 'male' craft – carpentry – on a temporary compensatory training scheme, she did not pursue this as a career. She was happy at the coffee warehouse because it brought her money which enabled her to pursue her other life ambitions – getting a flat and a car. This kind of job is one where she worked alongside adult women rather than as a trainee. *Katrin* is in fact the only one in the German sample who is not concerned about what sort of job she does, but would simply like to earn more money.

Of the young men, *Alan* in Liverpool is following an unskilled career. He left school and worked on a YTS scheme in a carpet warehouse where he was later taken on full time. However, following a reorganisation, he was laid off and at the time of the interview worked there casually while claiming unemployment benefit, a situation he was very unhappy about because he would prefer a full-time job. After one year's unemployment he was very depressed. He preferred to run his own business as he realised how limited his prospects were and thought that this might offer prospects of improvement. While this situation was fairly typical for Liverpool and we could describe more examples, it was not typical for Bremen. Nevertheless, we found a transition biography similar to *Alan* in Liverpool: *Sven* worked in a variety of schemes and was unemployed in between. He was concerned with finding money for his motorcycle hobby and became involved in criminal activities of various kinds. For him the elaborate German training system was of little use because he would prefer simply to have a well-paid manual job. In Swindon, the buoyant labour market offers opportunities for those without any training to move from job to job to improve their work conditions and pay and there were some examples of this in the sample. Although this could not be described as a 'career', it was satisfactory for young men there who did not see their job as their main source of identity. Training schemes did not seem necessary for social support under these circumstances.

For those in intermittent employment or unemployed, there was a sharp contrast between Liverpool and Bremen in that young people in Liverpool were afraid of unemployment and this was an important motivation for them to do certain jobs. In many cases,

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they did not see themselves as simply fitting in with the local labour market, but were actually seeking something interesting which would engage their identity in a positive way. However, they have not been very successful in finding such jobs. In Swindon, even spells out of work are not a great disadvantage as young people could move from job to job with confidence, and fear of unemployment was not a factor for either young women or men. In England, the nature of the local labour market was an important factor for young people in this group.

For the young men and women in intermittent work and unemployment, individualisation, in the positive sense of choosing between opportunities, was not so relevant because they were limited by the opportunities available in the labour market. Those who found jobs reported themselves as disengaged from their occupational identities, which were seen more as ways of earning money. However, the extended training in Germany offered more possibilities for positive individualisation even for this group. The possibilities of 'negative individualisation' in terms of perceptions of risk and uncertainty were certainly evident in this group, although the experiences of Liverpool youth were so negative that we would argue that it was material constraints that created a 'defensive' kind of individualisation.

Gender and domestic transitions

The work transitions we have explored so far are interlinked with other kinds of transitions in youth, including domestic transitions. However, the nature of these linkages has changed. Whereas marriage used to mark the movement from one household to another, it is evident that the movement towards independence can take place in other ways as marriage is increasingly postponed (see Jones and Wallace, 1992). Thus, the median age of first marriage in Britain rose from 21.4 years in 1971 to 23.3 years in 1987 and the number of teenage brides halved between 1980 and 1987. The median age of first birth for women likewise increased from 24 years in 1970 to 26.5 years in 1987 (Kiernan and Wicks, 1990). For young males

there has been a similar shift, except that they undertake these transitions roughly two years later on average.

In Germany the age of marriage is even older, perhaps reflecting the extended length of time in the education and training system. The average age of marriage for young women has risen to 26.7 years and this is similar to the age for young men. Birth rates have fallen in general, but the age of parents of first-born children reflects a similar process of people making these transitions at a later age. For Zinneker's thesis, this would illustrate that women are becoming more like men in their career orientations and therefore postpone domestic careers.

These publicly measurable indicators would seem to show that transitions in general have been lengthened and postponed since the early 1970s; they also show that for young women they are shorter than for young men. Furthermore, taking into account class and educational differences, those from middle-class origins have lengthier domestic transitions than do those from working-class origins (Jones and Wallace, 1992). This stretching of transitions has been accompanied by a dissociation of stages of transition from one another. It is no longer necessary to start work and advance in a career before living with a partner or having children.

From our survey we know that slightly more women (more than one-third) than men were living independently. Furthermore, slightly more women were married (although this was less than one-tenth of respondents) or living with partners, or were engaged to partners, although the numbers were also very small. A larger number also reported that they were 'going steady' with boy-friends. About the same numbers had or were expecting children (roughly one-tenth of the sample). Thus, few had actually embarked on domestic transitions at this stage in any of the samples. However, girls were far more likely to report that they spent time at home with their families. This may also be because girls were carrying out more domestic labour which may have kept them at home.

Turning now to the qualitative data, we can divide these other domestic relationships according to the same categories that we used for 'employment careers'.

Extended education

Those in extended education have the most reason to postpone domestic transitions and we would therefore expect them to be less concerned with these. According to previous studies, they are also less likely to do domestic work for their families (Griffin, 1985; Finn, 1987).

Laura, with the international business studies degree, for example had a boy-friend but did not plan to get married for a few years: she would like to find a job to finance the wedding first. She saw herself as continuing to work, even with children and could not envisage staying at home: 'I don't think I could stay at home, I think I'd be too bored'. *Cathy*, the school teacher, wanted to move in with her boy-friend, but did not see herself getting married yet.

In Germany, the story was similar for academic women. *Gisela*, the physiotherapist, wanted to postpone having children until she was 29 or 30. She wanted to find a man who could earn enough to support her and then she would give up work or work just part time while she had the children. She saw the advantage of a career in physiotherapy that she could pursue this:

> that it is an advantage in a career, when one can also work on when one has children, that one can break off and start again, or even work two days in the week or so.

Hence, it would appear that even those young women with a 'career' orientation were thinking of their careers in terms of future breaks for child-rearing.

For the young English men who were continuing in extended education, domestic circumstances were never mentioned. Some were concerned with their non-work lives but this was mainly in terms of an interest in travelling and their spare-time hobbies outside of working life. The young German men were more thoughtful with regard to their domestic circumstances. *Axel*, for example, felt that his accelerated academic career had left him little time to cultivate personal relationships and so he would like to meet a girl-friend. *Axel* also felt close to his parents and travelled home nearly every weekend when he first started studying.

It is evident that even with those in extended education, the young women were trying to balance the demands of a career with those of a family and they thought about this right from the beginning. Most of the men were not thinking in this way at all, apart from *Axel*, who was trying to find some sort of balance in his life between career and other preoccupations. We could see this as evidence of individualisation, but it would seem that these young men are not planning to spend part of their career in domestic work and child-rearing. Therefore the 'choices' they are making between work and non-work aspirations are qualitatively different from those of young women.

Training for a trade

Tracy, the office worker from Liverpool, had a boy-friend with whom she spent most of her spare time. Although they did not live together she thought that they would do so eventually. Because *Tracy*'s mother was often ill, she had to do much of the housework. Her brothers helped out, but it was primarily her responsibility even though she was one of the only people in the household who was employed: 'I don't do it all on me own, me brothers help and me dad does a bit. It's still quite a lot. I get stuck with all the ironing'.

Because it was so crowded at home and because she spent much of her time with her boy-friend, *Tracy* did not actually spend a great deal of time at home. With her boy-friend she went for walks, watched videos or helped with his band. She thought she may find her own house in two years' time but until then: 'I think I'll have to stay at home and do the ironing'. Her mother was greatly upset when she tried to leave Liverpool with a friend and so she had not tried to do so since. *Tracy* seemed as bored with her personal life as she was with her work life – trapped in an unsatisfactory set of circumstances but lacking both the confidence and the means to change the situation.

For *Judy*, her hairdressing qualification was a good life training because it provided a trade to which she could always return later: 'It's just knowing that you've got it there with you. You know, if you've got married and had children, you can always fall back on

it'. Most of all she would like to work abroad, and her hairdressing qualification should stand her in good stead for this too.

For *Doris*, the office worker from Germany, starting work meant that she had to give money to her parents and also had to do more housework. She also cooked her own meals. *Doris* had a strong orientation towards her family and had not yet considered future partnership relations.

Katrin, the part-time hairdresser from Germany, lived with her parents but had her own apartment within the house, so she enjoyed considerable independence within the home. She had a boy-friend. She saw herself as perhaps having children in the future if they both agreed. When she had children, she expected to take some time off work 'first to stay at home for a while' and this would take precedence over her plans for a career. Her future plans included remaining with her boy-friend and having a child.

For *Christiane*, despite her single-minded commitment to her career as a nurse, this was worked around future plans for a family. She planned to work for 'at least five or six years' and then to start a family. At this time she would work as a night nurse: 'Because it is then very good. At night the child sleeps and then the boy-friend or the husband is there and during the daytime one is there oneself'. The female profession which she pursued was therefore also flexible enough to accommodate her plans for a future family.

Some of the young women in Swindon who had got married or were living with boy-friends were less interested in their employment career because their domestic situation operated as an alternative form of identity. Hence, even though they had training, they did not look into the future for their job and evaluated the job in terms of what it could contribute to family life. These therefore seemed to be 'stagnant' careers. However, in the case of the self-employed mobile hairdresser, the job could be co-ordinated with domestic commitments, since she worked from home; she received a great deal of support from her husband, without which, she says, her work would not be possible. One way that young women could reconcile employment careers with domestic commitments is therefore to find

a female profession; another is to disengage one's identity from employment and to invest it in domestic life.

Of the German men, *Steffen*, the cook, never mentioned anything to do with family; he talked only of his career. He was close to his parents, however, and helped them with decorating their country house at weekends. None of the other German young men mentioned anything about their domestic plans!

In England, the young men were more aware of domestic issues: some of them had already entered new domestic situations. *William*, the electrician, had a girl-friend who was a nursery nurse and was pregnant. While he lived at his mother's house, he slept every night at his girl-friend's house and saw them continuing with this arrangement for some time. 'I stay there at nights, but I'm still living with me mum and dad. I just sleep there, then go home and get me bath, get changed in ours, I find it better that way.' He wanted to participate in child-rearing: 'I love kids. Yeah, I'll be there all the time. Getting up with it at night'. However, he did not see this putting an end to his plans for travel:

> Well, wait till I've got the money to buy a house, and then I'm going to finish my trade, live there a couple of years, sell the house and then we're going to buy a motorhome and save money to go away with as well.

Indeed, he would like to bring up his children somewhere else, perhaps in Australia: 'There's nothing here for the children or the kids growing up is there really?'

William clearly did not see his domestic responsibilities as in any way changing his work life. *Michael*, the transport clerk from Liverpool, was also married and living with his wife and child in their own home. At the time of interview his baby was only two weeks old and while he had participated in looking after the baby up until now, he saw the main responsibility as resting with his wife:

> Er, I know it's going to be a lot more strenuous for Joanne herself, but as I've said to her the last couple of weeks whilst I've been on leave and the baby's woken up in the middle of the night and that, I've been getting up to help her out, but as I've said, when I'm

getting up at six o'clock for work, I'm not going to feed the baby, so obviously it's going to be a lot harder for Joanne.

He recognised that his chances of travelling were made more difficult with a baby and he hoped his wife would go back to work part time rather than full time. Indeed, he hoped that his wife would give up work altogether. His wife's feelings about his job were irrelevant as they did not discuss it together.

Domestic responsibilities were already a reality for some of the young people in this group. However, again it is the young women who were planning their futures in ways which could accommodate domestic careers whereas this was seldom mentioned by the young men.

Intermittent work and unemployment

Lynne in Liverpool left a home crowded with many brothers and sisters to live first in a bedsit and later in a small flat which she found through a housing association. She could not afford to furnish or decorate the flat, but was generally very happy with it. She maintained strong links with her family, however, since she saw her mother most days and relied on them for supplementing her food. While *Lynne* had a boy-friend, she did not want to move in with him, as she explained their relationship was quite stormy.

Linda lived with her mother, her grandmother and her grandmother's brother and together they lived only on the income her mother earned as a part-time shop worker. Like many Liverpool families, their living circumstances were poor and over-crowded. She occasionally worked for her father (who lived elsewhere) in a pub, but could not get there very often as it was too far away. She lived with her engaged boy-friend, who had moved into her bedroom, although he lived only next door with his parents before that. She was previously engaged to someone else, but left him because he tried to control her too much. *Linda* stressed that she liked to be treated with respect like the adult she felt herself to be and she would like 'what everyone would like': a nice job, a nice house of her own and to be living with or married to her boy-friend.

In Swindon, there was one example of a young woman with a child who was happy to do part-time work in the secondary labour market because it fitted around her domestic responsibilities. She viewed employment purely as an adjunct to her life and not as a 'career' at all.

In Germany, *Conni*'s life was even more complicated. Her mother was dead and she lived with her grandmother and aunt; she was unhappy with them and spent a great deal of time with another aunt and her family. She cooked for herself and spent most of her time out of the house if possible. Her bedroom lay between her aunt's and her cousin's, neither of whom she got on with. 'And anyway we have only rows, only, from morning to night. I am always happy when I am not at home.' Her grandparents were going to Australia and her aunt was taking over the house. They had given her notice to quit in six months and she had to find somewhere else to live. She had been offered somewhere else by her grandparents for the full market rent of DM 470, which she accepted even though it was much higher than her income.

Katrin, the coffee warehouse worker from Bremen, lived with her large family in a rough area of Bremen where they occupied two apartments. She had her own room distinctively decorated as she liked it, and while she would have liked to get a flat of her own, she was in no hurry to do so. She helped her mother with the housework: 'Because, I see it like this, my parents have previously, when I was small, done everything for me. And I find it good when I can now give them some pleasure and when I can help them. For me it is important'. She observed that in her social circle, women have children and then leave their workplace; she saw this as an alternative career for herself in the future too.

Alan in Liverpool lived with his widowed mother and his two brothers, one of whom was married and also lived with them. He had to give up a good part of his social security to support them; he found the house over-crowded so that he tried to go out for walks as often as possible: 'It gets too crowded. We end up having loads of arguments'. His main friend is his bull-mastiff dog and, like many of the Liverpool respondents, he was depressed with little hope for the future, living on a very low income in an over-crowded house.

This group of people clearly had strategies for developing independence within the home and for pursuing private relationships even though beset by poverty and lack of adequate housing. Independence could be achieved in this way without the need to get married or leave home. Even those who left home had extensive connections with their home of origin. Housework was a normal part of the young women's life but not so much of the young men's in both countries.

In these examples, individualisation was less evident. Those at the bottom of the labour market saw fewer opportunities for choice, personal fulfilment or personal development. For young women, domestic circumstances could play a key role in their sense of identity, whereas for young men this did not appear to be the case. It is interesting to note that even where there was no possibility of fulfilling personal goals, as in Liverpool, young people had a clear sense of their own individuality. Whereas those with some training and regular employment could set up independent households together, those without this were in a far more difficult position.

Conclusions

At the beginning, we cited claims that the lengthening period of 'moratorium' between leaving school and entering work in Germany would lead towards a dissolution of gender roles. It was proposed that young women in particular are better prepared for a period of unstable employment and flexible work because of their attempt to combine employment with domestic responsibilities. The data examined here seem to indicate that this is not the case. While young women and men participate for longer periods in education and training in Germany, they do so in very different trajectories, leading into very different sectors of the labour market. Hence, the time and effort invested in education and training by young women does not lead ultimately to the same rewards as for young men. Furthermore, there appears to be a process, particularly in Germany, where stepping on and off the training 'carousel' helps to raise the aspirations of young men as they drift upwards from

stage to stage, but to lower or maintain the low aspirations of young women as they proceed through the system. The gender disparities in Germany were marked and the training system did little to overcome this. We did not have one example from Germany of a young person stepping outside a gendered role.

In Britain, the more direct connection with the labour market and shorter periods in education and training meant that young people were more dependent upon the nature of the local labour market. There were also more examples of young women doing non-stereotypical work in Britain. In Liverpool, one young woman had taken a business studies degree; another young woman wished to be a bus driver and later a lorry driver. However, despite having these aspirations, both young women were unemployed at the time that we interviewed them and seemed unable to realise them. It is impossible to generalise from such a small sample, but there is a possibility that rather than extended education and training serving to raise young women's prospects, it actually tends to channel them into more traditional female professions with fewer prospects and lower pay. The fact that young women in both England and Germany now obtain better qualifications, better even than their male peers at up to the age of 18, conceals the fact that they do not in the end get better jobs.

Further assumptions of modernisation theorists are that some young men are increasingly searching for non-career values in life and that young women are better prepared for an unstable labour market career. It is certainly the case that some of the young men in England had very little idea of what career they wished to pursue and at the time we interviewed them felt rather lost. One young man from Germany wanted to take some time off from his single-minded pursuit of qualifications to explore relationships with partners. However, all the young men thought of themselves ultimately as finding a 'career' of some kind, even if at 21 they had not quite decided what this should be. Not one young man mentioned the possibility of taking time out of a career for domestic commitments in either country. Although some young men were in some sort of 'moratorium' and some had also non-career goals, these in no way resembled women's perceptions of lives involved with domestic

responsibilities. While all the young women were committed to having jobs, they nearly all saw these as being ultimately fitted around domestic commitments.

Although young women in both countries were generally faced with these choices, it is possible that it is even more difficult for women in Germany to combine domestic and employment responsibilities than it is in England, because the emphasis on training relegates those who are untrained to a more marginal position in the labour market. Women who must find jobs to fit around families rather than devote themselves single-mindedly to a career may find themselves disadvantaged, unable to pursue the jobs for which they were trained. Furthermore, the hours of schooling and lack of part-time work opportunities may possibly all combine ultimately to disadvantage German women in this respect.

We have argued at the beginning of this book that this extended transition could be seen as encouraging a trend towards individualisation, as young people need to choose paths through complex training and education systems and therefore become more conscious about their choices. It has been assumed that this will affect young women more profoundly. Our reading of the data presented here would indicate that young women as well as young men are very self-conscious about the idea of finding a career and selecting the right training and pursuing educational qualifications to achieve it. Some young men and some young women in trajectories III and IV leading to the lower ends of the labour market in Britain did not have this orientation, but had instead an instrumental attachment to their jobs: a job was a way of earning money to pursue other goals. However, these were a minority in our sample. Others had not yet found a clear career goal, but they were self-conscious about this too. It is possible that the lengthening of the training system encourages a sense of searching for an identity in a 'vocation'. This was even more marked in Germany with the tradition of professional vocation in that country and the more extended education and training system. However, while young women may have become more conscious about how to pursue career goals, they nevertheless seemed to choose or be channelled into traditionally female occupations in those segments of the labour market dominated by women

and having lower pay and lower status. This increasing self-consciousness did not seem to lead them to challenge traditional gender stereotypes. In Britain, where young women had attempted to challenge traditional female stereotypes by pursuing different careers, these had not been successful. Rather, it appears that while young women perceive themselves as having choices and choosing goals towards which they move, these choices were tailored by traditional assumptions. However, they did not see themselves as being forced into such roles, for the most part they saw this as their own free decision. Furthermore, their self-conscious decision-making extended to planning lives around expected domestic commitments in the future. Nevertheless, young women were very committed to finding jobs and training and they saw equal opportunities as being an important issue. Overall, 'individualisation' in a restricted opportunity structure did not lead to the dissolution of gender roles, but to the reproduction of them.

CHAPTER IV

Steps towards adulthood

Introduction

Education and training plays an important part for young people making the transition towards adulthood. This chapter is in three sections and examines how the young people in our English and German samples managed elements of three typical status-passages in education and training: the experience of those on schemes designed to cope with unemployment or initial instability in employment; how those attending further education colleges or *Berufsschulen* perceived they were treated; and the financing of student status for those in higher education. This chapter looks at what emerged as key themes from the interviews and survey data on three common status-passages in education and training; the attitudes of those in employment towards work is not included here because it is a central theme in chapter VI. These themes relate to critical points for young people in managing out of their initial trajectories. The interview material and survey data are used in this chapter to illuminate the themes, so we range across the full sample of 160: hence we shall not identify the young people individually as in the biographical chapters which follow.

Experience of young people on schemes designed to cope with instability and unemployment

Our previous work provided some insights into young people on such schemes, as outlined in chapter I. It is now possible to provide a fuller, more longitudinal picture of entry into and progression out of schemes as well. Previously, we hypothesised that time spent on schemes seemed to confer relatively few labour market benefits in the medium term. Now virtually all the young people in our samples have completed at least one cycle of schemes. So we can restate our

case with much more precision, being able to examine the outcomes as well as the processes for the young people who spent time on such schemes.

Our previous work (Behrens and Brown, 1991a) highlighted that in three of the towns there were some very well-resourced non-firm-based schemes which offered substantive technical training, typically in some aspects of information technology. These were unrepresentative of the much more traditional and mundane nature of much training in remedial schemes. This section concentrates on the experience of young people on these more typical schemes designed to cope with initial instability and unemployment. These schemes, whether ABM G3 in Bremen, *Arbeiten und Lernen* in Paderborn, or non-firm-based Youth Training Schemes (YTS) in Liverpool (and to a minimal extent in Swindon), offered their work orientation as a rationale. They claimed to be preparing people for work, although in practice their success related largely to their perceived effectiveness as 'holding pools' until labour market conditions improved. Hence, such schemes were rarely used in Swindon throughout the 1980s, and declined rapidly in both Paderborn and Bremen towards the end of the decade. However, special schemes not only functioned as 'holding pools', but also helped young people with other problems, such as particular difficulties with employment, education or training, or with life in general.

Entry to schemes in Germany

The structure of the education system in Germany is such that it is virtually impossible to opt out of education and training before the age of 18. Indeed, those who do not attain the standard required to gain a school-leaving certificate are expected to remain in full-time education. Their chances of getting employment with prospects are very remote (Weidman, 1987) and as a consequence, they are effectively just waiting until they can get a job and often end up on work-orientation schemes such as *Arbeiten und Lernen* in Paderborn and ABM G3 in Bremen. They are joined by others, who usually have similarly low educational attainment. Most of the young people on schemes in both Bremen and Paderborn had had unstable

educational careers at school, with subsequent employment difficulties. The apprenticeships or jobs they had found, however, were invariably in areas where the prospects of being kept on (or of other employment) were remote. There were, however, significant minorities in both towns of young people who were comparatively well qualified and motivated but had been unable to get training places. This latter group were particularly likely to be young women, as young men took most of the training places (Zinneker and Fuchs, 1981) despite having performed on average less well at school.

Most of those on schemes and measures in the German samples had completed at least one 'educational or other loop' in order to prepare for a late entry into the dual system. They were joined, however, by people over 18 who were fulfilling the requirements of the *Arbeitsamt* in order to secure financial support. The individual careers of the young people up to the point when they decided to participate in a scheme varied greatly. Thus, alongside those who were still working towards and hoping for an apprenticeship were other youngsters who had withdrawn from the dual system for good. A third group comprised those who had not been successful in completing an apprenticeship, but nevertheless wanted to try again.

As a result, there were wide variations in the amount of work experience those on schemes had already had. Some, especially those without a school-leaving certificate, who had attended special school or *Hauptschule*, had not been able to find an apprenticeship and so joined a scheme. They were sometimes joined by those who had had some success at school and had been seeking apprenticeships with prospects, who when they were unsuccessful were either unwilling to take less popular apprenticeships or found those vacancies were filled by others. This was particularly likely for young women from Bremen.

Thus, one young woman from *Realschule* had no success in applying for clerical apprenticeships or for a training to become a goldsmith, so took a place on a scheme. There were also those who had started on orientation courses before ending up on a scheme. Two young men enrolled on a one-year orientation course after school at the local handicrafts training centre when they could not

find apprenticeships. Nevertheless, their ways on to the *Arbeiten und Lernen* scheme were different:

> After the year was over I did not know what to do. They [the teachers on the course] had not found anything for me. So I went to the *Arbeitsamt* and they told me to enrol with *Arbeiten und Lernen*.

> I enjoyed the orientation course. I went to look for an apprenticeship with the help of the *Arbeitsamt* while I was on the course. I stayed away for two weeks and the training centre said you cannot do that.

Others had had experience of work. One young man had a very good start as an apprentice toolmaker in a small company. After a year the *Meister* retired and the company closed down. Being made redundant he found himself a job in a welding workshop where he stayed for three months. He decided to continue the apprenticeship when he was offered a new training place. After constant conflicts with the new *Meister* he lost his job and enrolled with the *Arbeiten und Lernen* scheme. Another young man dropped out of two apprenticeships as painter and electrician before he found an apprenticeship as a metalworker, which he felt suited him. The company moved to another town and he was not prepared to leave Bremen. As he did not find a new employer, he enrolled with ABM G3. Another young person had had experience of a number of unskilled jobs, before becoming unemployed and getting a place on a scheme.

Overall then, whether entry to a scheme is from education, training, employment or unemployment, those that go on schemes are widely perceived as having problems in making transitions to employment. Many people then locate the problem with the individual rather than the state of the labour market, such that the individuals are seen as being the problem rather than having the problem.

Progression from schemes

Some young people maintain hopes of completing an apprenticeship, although time spent on such schemes could greatly reduce their chances of being taken into permanent employment especially if these are coupled with a previously unstable employment record and/or spells of unemployment. The schemes themselves then become identified with those people who have had problems with their education and/or employment. A vicious circle can be set up, whereby those who have been on schemes continue to face problems in the labour market and this reinforces beliefs that those young people completing such schemes are themselves problems. Staff from the Paderborn *Arbeiten und Lernen* scheme acknowledged this as a major problem: they felt that the most they could hope to achieve was to help young people sort out any 'problems' and then get them into unskilled employment.

The scheme was not a 'sink' though, since their prospects on the Paderborn *Arbeiten und Lernen* scheme were considerably brighter than for many of their contemporaries on similar schemes. This was not only because the Paderborn youth labour market was healthier than say Bremen, but also because the social workers running this particular scheme had made concerted efforts to establish contacts with employers. These connections not only enabled the young people to learn about available jobs or apprenticeships during their time on the scheme, but also greatly increased the chances that they would be recruited by these particular employers. Whereas these opportunities were nearly always for unskilled jobs in the late 1980s, the demographic decline has had a positive effect such that supply of training places now exceeds demand (BMBW, 1991a). The relations built up by the scheme officials had made the young people acceptable to employers for jobs and more recently for apprenticeships.

Staff saw the scheme as giving young people time for personal development and to 'mature'. Such schemes could be considered as sheltered niches that insulate young people from the labour market in which they have been struggling, allowing them to return if their personal circumstances do improve (perhaps after further social

support). Indeed, it is important to remember that such schemes not only have vocational objectives, but also seek to help with young people's general personal development. The Paderborn experience was that some of the young people who quickly obtained jobs still struggled with subsequent employment; although they had made progress on the schemes, the transition back to employment without any form of continuing support proved difficult. The crucial social support role of schemes for some young people was emphasised by a social worker from a Bremen scheme. That is, those with difficult family backgrounds, for example involving sexual abuse, alcohol or drug misuse, or who were themselves having problems with drugs, often needed the continuing support of scheme staff.

The young people on schemes from Paderborn and Bremen had a variety of educational and training experiences, which increased with their age. Bearing in mind the relationship between entry into the dual system and age, it can be expected that young people who enrol soon after school and manage to escape from schemes as soon as possible will have the chance of being integrated into the training market. A study of young people without a formal qualification shows that only 8% of those who started as unskilled workers find their way into a firm-based or school-based apprenticeship (BMBW, 1991b).

Realistically then, many of those on schemes were simply looking for unskilled employment, but for those still looking for apprenticeships, the increasing buoyancy of labour markets in both Bremen and Paderborn offered real hope. That they were now in their early 20s did not deter them. They recognised that at their age there would be a trade-off between longer-term prospects coming from completion of an apprenticeship and the immediate financial rewards, but few prospects, of unskilled unemployment. A young woman who was offered a clerical apprenticeship in the administration of the supermarket where she worked after *Arbeiten und Lernen* was in no doubt:

> Yes, I absolutely want to have an apprenticeship... I will earn half of what I get now, if I am lucky... I think I could probably stay in the supermarket, not only on a short time basis, but with a contract.

> But I don't want to become old and grey there. Sometime I want to leave and it is doubtful whether I would get another job without an apprenticeship.

She explained that she would stay longer with her parents than she intended in order to gain skilled status through completion of her apprenticeship. Similarly, a young man from Bremen said he was determined to start an apprenticeship after ABM and was already saving: 'I put aside some Marks now and then start the apprenticeship – then I have some more Marks in my pocket and will get along better'.

However, for some people the prospect of further deferred gratification was unattractive. A young man in the middle of his alternative service after *Arbeiten und Lernen* wants: 'a job, I don't want an apprenticeship. That is too late now. Three years apprenticeship, no! In three years I am 26, that's not good enough'.

A young man who had found an unskilled job from a scheme and earned DM 2,000 before tax as a printing assistant felt that it was no longer feasible to start an apprenticeship: 'I cannot afford it any more ... DM 400 or so is not enough to pay for a car and a flat'. Instead he felt that there should be recognised training opportunities for people in employment to gain additional qualifications: he regularly attended welding courses organised and financed by the *Arbeitsamt*.

However, besides those who made successful transitions either into unskilled employment or an apprenticeship, there were those who were still finding it difficult to cope with demands of either employment or training. For example, one former scheme participant had great difficulties at school when he first started his job in the supermarket and after he finished the scheme he fell back on the 'caring' support from the *Arbeiten und Lernen* social workers. Gradually he became more 'part of the department' and less dependent on support from the outside. The possible lack of support in a new working environment and the fear 'that my school-leaving marks will not be good enough' prevent him from applying for a training place.

Scheme officials themselves were often anxious to point out that they had mixed success: 'we have some problematic youngsters who are not getting anywhere because they have private, psycho-social problems ... but there are just as many who started here and went on into schools or apprenticeships'. Such schemes then have a dual function for progression: acting as a 'holding pool' of last resort to those seeking an apprenticeship or employment, and offering social support to those finding it difficult to fit into a work or training environment or to cope with life more generally. Such schemes then are trying to help shelter and support those young people who neither have a status within the education and training system nor have been able to get and/or hold down a job. They have an explicit social support function trying to help those struggling to make a transition to adult employment. In terms of status passage then, time spent on schemes for some is really just 'status in waiting', whereas for those requiring social support it can be seen as a period of enhancing readiness for subsequent employment status. But how far though did what they did on schemes enhance their status?

For those on schemes who did not need any basic skills remediation, it was questionable how useful would be the skills that they acquired on schemes. The new skills and abilities that the young people on schemes in Bremen were developing were often in woodwork, cookery and similar practical areas. Lauglo and Lillis (1987) identified these were the traditional pre-vocational subjects in many countries but

> with hazy links of content to vocational training after school and without conferring clear advantage in selection to such training. (Lauglo and Lillis 1987: 21)

This seemed to fit the Bremen schemes: the young people were engaged on a course of action, which did little to improve educational attainment, their fund of general work-related competences or improve their prospects of entering an apprenticeship. The chances of other employment also appeared remote in a depressed labour market, although these improved as the labour market picked up. They were, therefore, more effective as 'holding pools' and in giving

some young people remediation in very basic work-related competences, rather than a more comprehensive form of preparation for employment or further vocational education and training. The Paderborn *Arbeiten und Lernen* scheme, with its strong contacts with employers and opportunities to find out about different types of employment, was an example of a scheme concentrating upon basic requirements of work-related performance. The young people on the scheme appreciated the more practical orientation of the scheme and to a lesser extent the 'school lessons', although for the latter the major effect appeared to be on the participants' confidence and motivation:

> helped a little, especially maths. I have to calculate prices where I work now.
>
> I liked especially the practical part. The work and they treated us like adults. Sometimes one could work all on its own. The *Meister* found out very quickly what one had experience with and told us new things.
>
> I liked most to experience different materials. Before the scheme I never worked with timber. I learnt it and practised it in my work-placements in playgrounds.

A young woman who was employed by a supermarket after the scheme enjoyed the work in the office of the local adult education centre and was motivated through that experience to look for a clerical apprenticeship.

The result was that in both Bremen and Paderborn, young people with low previous educational attainment and/or those who had struggled in employment and training could have their confidence restored by participation in schemes. This emphasis on remediation, however, meant that for those who had simply been unable to find an apprenticeship, such schemes offered them little challenge. This was particularly the case in Bremen (Behrens and Brown, 1991c). Even when a scheme was more challenging, as with Paderborn *Arbeiten & Lernen*, this did not always greatly help the young people get employment, because of stereotyping from employers. The schemes did seem to be achieving their goals of helping some

young people with personal development and giving them a realistic chance of employment. This was much more likely to be into unskilled unemployment, despite the initial orientation of such schemes stressing the importance of progression on to an apprenticeship (Casey, 1984). However, some spent time on schemes simply because of the state of the apprenticeship market and there was never any doubt that they would be able to perform satisfactorily within the dual system once they had secured a place within it (Münch, 1986). As a result, when the apprenticeship market picked up the numbers on such schemes dwindled rapidly.

Entry to and progression on schemes in England

The experience of young people on schemes designed to cope with instability and unemployment in the two English towns were markedly different. There were very few such schemes in Swindon; they were invariably catering for young people with special educational needs and/or those requiring other social support. They were also perceived as generally working quite well (Behrens and Brown, 1991c), although none of the Swindon sample had spent time on such schemes. In contrast, in Liverpool in the 1980s, the depressed labour market meant that non-firm-based schemes were prevalent: they were in effect warehousing measures for many young people (Roberts, Siwek and Parsell, 1989). The problem was that even if people on the schemes did develop a fund of work-related competences, while on work placement or on schemes (Behrens & Brown, 1991c), such experience often had no general labour market utility, nor did it equip young people for anything other than low-level employment (which in any case was more likely to go to those more highly qualified). As Banks and Evans (1989) note, longer-term evaluation of post-YTS destinations affects attitudes towards YTS. In Liverpool, non-firm-based YTS was seldom perceived as providing a route into employment.

The adverse labour market meant that even 'good' schemes were often seen as just a temporary respite from unemployment. Indeed, as other studies have highlighted, vocational training cannot significantly improve prospects for most potential workers without changes

to employment opportunities in the labour markets (Rees, Williamson and Winckler, 1989). Both young people and scheme staff then were well aware that for general non-firm-based schemes (and many firm-based ones) the question arises as to whether the training should be judged in isolation or should future prospects and possibilities for progression be included in the judgement.

As in the other three towns, however, some schemes did have a social support function. The problem was that as the warehousing function expanded, so the social support function became progressively squeezed. One trainer pointed out that sharp increases in student numbers, coupled with reduced funding, made it more difficult both to offer individual support and to offer challenges which could sometimes lead to significant self-reappraisal for young people, as sometimes occurred after spending time in a different environment, for example doing outward bound activities.

The schemes for long-term unemployed people were seen by both Jobcentre and careers service staff in Liverpool as largely ineffective. They broke up periods of unemployment but otherwise had little effect. Government policy was also perceived as lacking direction, for example: 'schemes and ideas are removed and reappear at a later date under a different title'. Similarly, both careers teachers and trainers highlighted that government statements about education and training frequently had 'no follow through'; schemes would be announced, some may flourish for a short while but there would be no sustained commitment to make them work. Indeed, previous 'training schemes which contained little training' were seen to have left a legacy in the attitude of some young people, whereby 'it is very difficult to reverse their negative attitudes and motivate them to take up training'. However, the deep-seated and continuing nature of Liverpool's unemployment problems meant that an assistant manager of a training scheme thought that most young people now had a more serious attitude in that increasingly they recognised that they had to put themselves out to find work.

Other scheme managers drew attention to the way that attitudes towards schemes were very mixed. Managers of firm-based schemes, with reasonable prospects, were explicit in that they were looking for the 'best quality young people': this was perceived as including

commitment to school even if attainment was not high. Those young people who had felt alienated by school found that it was almost impossible to get any training with prospects. A social worker saw this as a vicious circle whereby 'the present system of training schemes offer very little incentive for young people to take up places... [Those applying] tend to be under-achievers and poorly motivated, and the schemes poor money and perceived lack of prospects does not encourage them'.

The same questions about the value of the skills learned on schemes to future employment prospects could be asked of the Liverpool schemes as of the Bremen ones. Thus, one young man gave up unemployment benefit (the dole) to go on a community industry programme, where he went round 'doing like things for the community like painting or building or whatever'. He quite liked the work, but when the scheme ended it was followed by further unemployment and eventually another scheme: 'I was on the dole for about ... two years. I went on ET [Employment Training] I was doing gardening, I only went on it because the dole asked me to go on it, I left after about two months'.

Unlike the workshop-based Bremen scheme, this involved developing skills through doing 'work', even if pay was an allowance rather than wages. The likelihood of the skills developed doing much to enhance employment prospects was remote. Arguably it did help the Liverpool young man to break up unemployment spells with short stints working as a labourer. The skills developed could almost be seen as reinforcing the prospects of such people remaining on the margins of the employment structure, rather than even attempting to transform their prospects.

Another young man spent four months on an ET scheme doing joinery, but he 'had to leave the place 'cos I got asthma, from all the wood dust, it was getting on me chest. Even if I was wearing a mask, it was just like bad'. However, even if he had been able to complete the scheme, the outcome would have been more likely to lead to an interest or hobby than employment. A young woman also pointed out that some ET scheme locations were expensive to reach from

some parts of the city:

> I had to travel to Halewood, and it was costing me like three pound a day bus fares ... and they expected you to travel from like a fortnight for twenty pounds ... [going on ET was unemployment benefit plus ten pounds a week] ... but it was costing me ten pounds a week.

Others were similarly dubious about the quality and value of ET:

> The ETs, they are bad work like I know a lot of people that have been on them, and they've said like there's too many people in a group to be taught a skill, 'cos there's only one teacher.

The case histories of the Liverpool sample did not show a single case where time spent on a scheme designed to cope with unemployment and employment instability was thought to have enhanced employment prospects. Some of the young people had found work subsequently, but did not see experience on the scheme as having contributed anything to this process. There were examples of young people speaking highly of their experience on schemes, but these were invariably schemes that took 16 or 17 year olds, usually straight from school. Thus, one young woman had learned commercial skills at a YTS centre, and subsequently had worked for almost five years as a general office clerk. Another young woman spoke very highly of a special scheme set up for disabled people. Training on schemes mainly for school-leavers was experienced and perceived by young people and trainers alike as highly variable. However, subsequent schemes for unemployed people were almost universally regarded as having little effect on subsequent employment and training prospects. In some cases, however, staff expressed the view that they could help with the development of basic skills or more generally with the personal development of young people who had been experiencing difficulties in making the transition to adult status.

Achievements on schemes, including where young people attained some, mostly low-level, vocational qualifications were likely to prove very perishable if they were not supplemented by further

qualifications and/or a stable employment record. Overall then, completion of schemes, including YTS, did not confer any continuing value. Thus, while in certain occupational fields in buoyant labour markets like Swindon in the 1980s, even quite modest training can launch a career. However, in depressed labour markets, training that does not lead to substantive vocational qualifications is of very limited value.

Discussion

For young people who are least well qualified to enter the labour market in terms of both educational attainment and their employment record, either work-based or education-based schemes seem capable of generating in young people positive images of their fund of work-related competences. The state of the local labour market, however, was likely to be a more significant influence than the quality of remedial or other special schemes and measures in whether the young people's confidence that they would be able to perform well in employment was put to the test. Another problem was that while schemes could be successful in facilitating personal development of those struggling to make a transition to employment and training, they could be overwhelmed by large numbers of young people who were there only because of the depressed nature of the labour market. In such circumstances, the necessary social support and basic skills development of the former was sometimes diluted, while the curriculum and general orientation of the scheme was often inappropriate for those being 'warehoused'. Overall, there may be doubts about the adequacy of either form of vocational preparation schemes because of the possible short-term value ('perishability') of the young people's experience. That is, both systems seem to put such a heavy reliance on vocational preparation, and this is severely compromised if it is followed by unemployment. In Germany, schemes adopted one of two approaches. One approach was to develop practical skills, whose usefulness to future job prospects were rather minimal. Perhaps they hoped to transform young people's opinions of themselves, seeing self-confidence as a key weapon in their search for employment. The other approach

was not only to offer social support, but also to help young people develop their job-seeking skills and working with employers to get them employment opportunities. Schemes were much more likely to be of the former type, as the federal and regional legislatures prescribe and regulate these forms of vocational education. The system responds to labour market fluctuations by expanding or contracting the numbers of students. The extended transitions are also a factor here, in that time spent in compulsory education and on schemes could mean that young people could spend up to five years in such 'holding pools', until the labour market picked up and then they were able to effect an entry into an apprenticeship or eventually a job. This was the case even in Bremen.

In England, the work component of most schemes was much greater, even in those which were non-firm-based, particularly through the use of work placements. There was a direct relationship between both amount and type of provision and the state of the labour market. In Swindon, non-firm-based YTS was a relatively small form of training provision, but none the less was responsive to the needs of the local labour market. In Liverpool, YTS was expanded to meet the acute problems of youth unemployment, but in practice many of these opportunities were 'more like waiting rooms and warehouses than routes towards any kind of adult employment' (Roberts and Parsell, 1989). Entry to those schemes which did offer opportunities for progression was highly competitive, but time spent upon other schemes seldom did much to improve employment prospects and the experience gained, even when viewed as valuable, was often highly 'perishable'. Some non-firm-based schemes did try to offer enhanced guidance and support for personal development, but as with similar German schemes they suffered from 'labelling' as being inferior to work-based routes.

The primary de facto function of schemes in the mid-1980s to late 1980s in both countries was to operate as 'holding pools' or 'warehouses'. Neither workshop nor work-based schemes gave much 'added value' to the young people who completed them in terms of enhanced employment prospects or marketable qualifications. Indeed, there was an irony in that those schemes that did most in terms of personal development for young people with

'problems' (*Arbeiten und Lernen* and some non-firm-based YTS) were often stigmatised because of the image of their clients on entry. This meant that these schemes were the first to be squeezed because of the pick up of the labour market (Germany) and the change in ...ling regulations (England). Most schemes in the four towns did little to enhance prospects of gaining employment. The prime difference between the countries was probably that the more explicitly work-oriented English route signalled that they had achieved adult status (in that they had proved they could do adult jobs, even if only for a year or two), whereas the workshop-based German route emphasised that they had not yet made the transition to an adult employment status.

After varying amounts of time on schemes, in the extended German transitions some young people still sought entry into the dual system and others were reconciled to unskilled work. The latter, whose careers were damaged in some way (typically by some combination of poor educational attainment, uncompleted apprenticeships, unemployment and time on schemes), sought employment which was either unskilled or otherwise outside the mainstream employment channels. It is only at this age (21–22) that we can be sure that they have been marginalised. This is because the schemes did operate successfully as 'holding pools' in reintegrating some young people back into the training system. They were still, however, some years away from successful entry into skilled employment itself, and there was likely to be continuing attrition during the course of their apprenticeships. Previously, we could only surmise that some young people's careers indicated that they were peripheral workers in the making; it is only at this stage in their careers that we can clearly identify that some young people have indeed been marginalised in the labour market. It is likely, however, that they will be joined by many others whose hopes of skilled employment have been kept alive during their extended transitions, but whose apprenticeships are in areas where the prospects of realising such hopes are actually quite slim (BMBW, 1991a).

Many of the 'failures' of the English Vocational Education and Training (VET) system were clearly identifiable by age 19 and these continued on the margins of the labour market. By age 22, however,

they were also joined by some of those who had initially been successful in getting employment without qualifications, but who found it difficult to get work in a much harsher economic climate if they lost their jobs through, for example, redundancy. In contrast, the first clear evidence of 'failures' in the German VET system had only just emerged. They were the first, but were unlikely to be the last, of those having failed to complete one or more apprenticeships who now sought only unskilled work.

Adult status in the *Berufsschule* and college?

In considering the responses of young people to their treatment in the *Berufsschule* and the further education college, it is important to appreciate the wider context. We are concerned here with the status-identity connotations of the time spent in post-16 educational institutions for transitions to adulthood. We are not looking at educational performance, the curriculum and the relationship to work, except in so far as they influence status-identity considerations. However, it is necessary to say something about the broad differences between the major exclusively post-16 education providers in each country: colleges of further education and *Berufsschulen*.

Colleges of further education in England provide a wide range of provision, both academic and vocational, and generally have substantial full-time as well as part-time provision. They have been the most innovative sector of education, and although under-funded, they have expanded considerably since the mid-1980s. Despite changes in funding and support, and attempts to get employers to take a greater share in vocational education and training, colleges in practice play a pivotal role in many areas of vocational education and training. In contrast, the *Berufsschulen* offer only vocational education, and then almost exclusively to day-release students. Particular *Berufsschulen* are likely to specialise in certain vocational areas (with some institutions monotechnics), and competition between providers is unlikely. The apprentices often regard their

time at *Berufsschule* as much less important than their training at work. This lower status is also evident in the attitudes of both state and employers. As a consequence, the public sector *Berufsschulen* suffer chronic under-funding and low morale and there is little political commitment to reform. In addition, many larger companies run their own *Berufsschulen*. The curriculum, by law, contains a much greater proportion of general education than would be expected in England and the teaching methods tend to be much less learner-centred (HMI, 1991). Even among those advocating reform there is little agreement. Some educationalists wish to see greater integration of the vocational and general education components, with an increased emphasis upon the active development of critical citizenship. This would require reformation of teaching methods too. Their opponents argue that on the contrary the *Berufsschulen* should be made just vocational: teaching theory and preparing young people for examinations. While there is agreement upon the need for reformation, there is no consensus or political will to effect a change.

This contextualisation is necessary in that superficially the colleges and *Berufsschulen* may appear to be very similar. However, it is arguable that, across VET provision as a whole, colleges in England are highly significant and represent much of the best practice, with the major problem being the continued lack of a 'training culture' among most employers and parents (Brown and Evans, 1992). In Germany, however, *Berufsschule* is regarded as less important compared to the practical training in the firm, and is widely considered to be problematic in a number of respects. None of this affects our analysis about status-passages; indeed it makes them more explicable, but it is necessary to prevent any rash conclusions that English VET would be superior to the German.

Germany: 'In *Berufsschule* you are treated just like in school'

Participation in the *Berufsschule* is compulsory for all German youngsters up to the age of 18 if they are not enrolled in full-time education or training. This is critical to the perception of young

people and adults alike: it is recognised that education will continue in some form until at least 18. The *Berufsschule* is seen as having a clear role in continuing general education, and not just in providing vocational education: there are strong continuities with previous forms of schooling. The *Berufsschulen*, together with the employers, are the partners in the dual system charged with providing practical and theoretical training for apprentices. Teachers within the system, however, have long believed that they have an inferior position compared with the social partners on vocational training committees (Münch, 1986). They see this as symptomatic of their lack of status and this is compounded by a lack of resources. The major funding bodies for the *Berufsschulen* are *Länder* governments. The drastic under-funding of this part of the educational system is acknowledged as a problem, but so far nobody has felt responsible to take care of it (Deutscher Bundestag, 1989; Lisop and Huisinga, 1990). It is a problem which concerns every school-leaver who does not enrol with a higher education institution. The consequences for the dual system of a more active consideration of policy are therefore a purely academic question at the moment.

In contrast to students in English colleges, apprentices in Paderborn and Bremen are under tight control at the *Berufsschule*. For example, in the case of absence the *Berufsschule* immediately informs the employer. It is this continuity with school, still being treated as a pupil rather than an individual who takes part in working life, which was time and again mentioned by apprentices when commenting upon the *Berufsschule*. The choice of teaching methods similarly reminded the apprentices of their school experiences 'the changeover ... was not so great'. They also felt that there was duplication in that the liberal and social subjects had already been covered: 'we had all this at school'; it was 'a repeat of what you learn in every school'. The teachers were seen as the same as at school in their focus upon examinations: 'in the first place you prepare for examinations. It is important [to them] what might be tested in an examination'.

Only one respondent considered that she had been given greater liberty and freedom, and significantly that was outside the mainstream, at a special school for design. Indeed, later she found the

transition back to mainstream provision difficult. She attended a full-time course at *Handelsschule*:

> In the beginning, I must say, I had real difficulties attending the *Handelsschule* at Paderborn, I was just not used to it... I had to do what they wanted me to do, there is de facto no autonomy left. In the beginning it was difficult, but in the meantime ... there is just no way out.

This is not to say that the young people did not mostly value what they learned at the *Berufsschule*, nor that they were unaware of other disadvantages like the lack of resources and large teaching groups, but rather that they frequently drew attention to the similarity with school. That is, going to *Berufsschule* clearly represented a continuity with their previous status as a school pupil, rather than marking a partial transition to a more adult status. The small concessions which were made to a more adult status, for example the switch from Christian names to the more formal use of title and surname, were subtle rather than marking any type of sea-change in attitudes, as the whole environment and ethos in post-16 education were continuous with what happened previously. Of course, even the message from the societal level is quite clear that all young people remain in some form of education (either full-time or part-time) until they are 18. Indeed, the element of compulsion, whereby some young people clearly resented being there, was itself a source of complaint from teachers in both Paderborn and Bremen. Overall then, attendance at *Berufsschule*, for all its value in other respects, had no significance for making steps towards adulthood. Indeed, for most apprentices experiences were seen as continuous rather than different from the rest of the compulsory schooling system. There was no signal to young people that post-school education in the *Berufsschulen* was different from what went before and it could not be construed as a move towards more adult status.

In Paderborn, the heads of the *Berufsschulen* were not unaware of such criticisms, but thought they were greatly constrained by under-funding and a perceived lack of interest in this part of the dual system. They considered that at the moment the teacher/pupil ratio

is such that not all lessons can be taught to the depth required by the syllabus, nor can smaller learning groups and different teaching methods be introduced. One head teacher summarises: 'what is left is to help them through the apprenticeship'. In most cases this means discipline and preparation for examinations. 'This is, of course, not easy. But I have to take up the cudgels for the young people they are all very motivated and willing to cope with the situation.' The head teacher's positive statement about the relationship between apprentices and the institution is reflected in some interviews in the way that some apprentices feel that the *Berufsschule* could be very helpful during their training – but for the reasons given cannot perform in this way at the moment. Others have also found greater resentment among young people to aspects of compulsory education than towards their work (Allerbeck and Hoag, 1985).

The above may appear very critical, although the HMI report (1991) on a recent visit to Germany picked up similar commentaries from students and teachers. Also, the critical tone was representative of young people's comments to us. Indeed, as the example given below shows, even a positive comment can be double edged. A hairdresser in Paderborn experienced great support from her teacher when she had difficulties with her boss:

> But she is an exception. She gave me ideas on what I can do after I finished my apprenticeship because I want to get out of this job. She is a great help because she discusses with me pros and cons. She is taking my problems seriously.

Although some young people from our sample had positive experiences with the institution and others acknowledged the positive opportunities that it could hold for them, the overall assessment was a sceptical one. The *Berufsschule* is judged by the performance of the staff and by the impression that the taught subjects were partly repetitive and not building up from what they learned at school. The most important criterion was the interaction between *Berufsschule* and employer, which is reduced in the young people's view to issues of control over them, rather than seeking to improve their training. There can be no doubt that the view that the content and

outcomes of teaching at the *Berufsschule* should be judged separately from the issue of how they are treated would receive short shrift from the young people themselves. They clearly wish to be treated more like adults and the fact that they are not is a source of grievance.

England: 'In college you are treated like an adult'

Some young people from the two English towns did sometimes complain about the content of what they did at college. However, they were invariably very positive about how they were treated as adults, and this was often vividly contrasted with how they were treated at school. This is perhaps one of the advantages of a voluntary system: tutors in further education (FE) colleges know that they have no 'hold' over students; although individual staff may sometimes act in authoritarian ways, the whole ethos and environment is geared to treating students as adults. Similarly, the staff of the new sixth-form college in Swindon were also aware that young people could go into either employment or the FE college and that it was desirable to offer a similarly adult environment. Certainly the students seemed well aware of the changed environment in post-compulsory education. Even students who had done A-levels at college remarked about how they had been most enthusiastic about the move to college and the way they were treated. Some of the many positive comments included the following:

> It was brilliant. It was really good ... you're here because you want to be here, you're not being forced so therefore we'll treat you as adults and if you want to do something you do it and if you don't you don't ... there is some rules but not, it's not as clinical as at school.

> It was great because there was so much relaxed atmosphere. There was no sort, you must wear school uniform, you must be there at a certain time, you must have a register to go in. You must do this. It was a relaxed atmosphere. I was keener to learn with a relaxed atmosphere rather than someone saying you will do this and you

will have your homework done on this certain time. So yes, I thought it was much better.

They treated you more like an adult at college. They were sort of on Christian name terms and they would do anything to help whereas at school or my school, they tend to be very prim and proper.

It's like most people are your age group and the teaching standard was pretty high there. It was good. It's just different. Different environment. It was really good.

Some say, call me Geoff, or, you know, you can tell me this you can tell me that ... made you feel a little bit better ... because, how they put it over but it seemed like it was more adult than, you know, it was. You done it because you wanted: he thought you was more of an adult and so you wanted to try and beat him like, try and prove that you could be.

That age 16 is so clearly seen as a structural break in the English system means that both staff and students expect changes in the way that young people are treated. Even those schools with sixth forms as in Liverpool invariably relax some key rules, for example over uniform, leaving school premises, staying in during breaks or the like, for sixth-formers. Such acts acquire a symbolic importance, marking out a clear status transition. While in post-16 education students are treated more like adults than in Germany, it is perhaps also worth pointing out that in England students are treated much more like a child pre-16 than in Germany, particularly in relation to all the rules governing behaviour outside the classroom.

Certainly the sharp English transition, while providing many students with an almost tangible sense of release or liberation, did have two disadvantages. First, the difference between school and college was not always appreciated by those most alienated by school: they were perhaps just as likely to regard college as simply being the next 'block of education' following school. One Liverpool careers officer felt that colleges should try to signal their distinctiveness more clearly to school-leavers. Second, the new-found freedom could come as a shock. Indeed, some young people drew

attention to the way some students had struggled to come to terms with the lack of compulsion and being given responsibility for their own learning:

> The biggest problem that some of my friends had – they went straight from school and nobody ever told you what it was like going to college and it's so much more relaxed – some of them failed it ... at college they say well if you don't do it, well on your back be it, you know, you'll fail, as simple as that.
>
> Some people I think they could probably do with the school authority of saying do this or else, 'cos they probably found that wher they got there they didn't have to do it they probably didn't do it, you know. I did know of people that sort of skived a lot 'cos they didn't have to be there, nobody bothered you know, just turned up at, you know, when they had to.

These failings were not always just recognised in others. Thus, one young woman, looking back at her time at college, admitted that she used to skip lessons and that she

> never worked particularly hard at my A-levels though ... I was having too much of a good time to do any work ... I knew that I was going to be a lot more responsible for myself, but this didn't kind of encourage me to be a lot more responsible.

The more adult environment was often also accompanied by the use of less directive teaching styles, while classes were better resourced, smaller and in some cases more practical. One engineer commented favourably upon the more practical orientation and presentation of his engineering course: 'after the first week I thought well, if I'd known this at school I'd have passed my O-level physics with an 'A'', whereas they 'just teach things at school to pass the exams' and they have more limited resources: 'books were out of date... we used to see who could get the lowest date, you know, the oldest book'.

This appreciation of college was not confined to those doing expressly vocational courses; others also appreciated more adult teaching and learning styles. Thus one young woman looking back

at her time as a CPVE (Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education) student drew attention to the way they could work at their own pace and how they 'mostly had discussions groups'. While a graduate thought that A-levels at college had been setting you up for university: 'you're encouraged to study on your own a lot more and note taking, things like that. Learn how to analyse'. A picture emerges then of more differentiated provision at college, where you were treated as an adult and the whole approach to teaching and learning was a 'hell of a lot different'. (It should be remembered that these young people were 16 in 1985, which predates the introduction of GCSE, TVEI (Technical and Vocational Education Initiative), the use of records of achievement and other attempts to change pre-16 approaches to teaching and learning.)

Overall then, what is of comparative interest is the way that going to college at 16 (and to a much more limited extent 'staying on' in the sixth form) in England was almost universally seen both at the time and retrospectively as representing a significant move towards being treated more like an adult. Whereas in Germany, the young people saw much more of a continuity in the way they were treated in education before and after 16, not only if they remained in full-time education but also if they attended *Berufsschule* part time. Going to college represented an important structural break in English status-passages, whereas in Germany attending *Berufsschule* meant that apprentices had their status of a student and trainee in a more or less continuous education system reinforced. Going to *Berufsschule* had no adult connotations, other than being a necessary stage in the transition to and attainment of an adult occupational status.

Financing of student status in higher education

For some students in all four towns the decision to go on to higher education was unproblematic. Their own aspirations and the expectations of school, peers and parents meant that it was seen as a

natural progression. Often they did not seriously consider other alternatives, such as employment, and how to finance their studies did not loom large in decisions about whether to enter higher education (HE). For other prospective students, however, finance was a key consideration. In the most extreme cases, lack of sufficient financial support and the need to contribute to family income were seen as effectively ruling out the possibility of entering higher education for the foreseeable future. Even in more affluent homes, where HE entry was still a feasible proposition, finance may act as a constraint upon where the young person chose to study. Thus in Liverpool, one young woman, who already had a brother at the local polytechnic, felt that she could go to university only if she continued to live at home: 'I didn't move away, because basically I don't think mum and dad could have afforded to send me away ... so I stayed here'.

A careers counsellor for *Abiturienten* was aware of similar pressures on young people from Bremen. In particular, some opted for *Fachhochschulen*, because it was possible to get a degree within three years rather than the five or six years at university. This meant both that they would be able to start earning earlier and that their debt upon completion of studies was also likely to be significantly lower. Besides being a possible influence upon location, finance could also affect the timing of entry into higher education. Thus, one young German man saw the money he earned working in a local hospital, doing alternative community service, as critical in helping to finance his HE study. In all four towns there were examples of some young people making assessments of whether they could afford to go into HE. Certainly in England, some of those, for whom finance was not an issue in the initial decision to go into higher education, became increasingly concerned about money as student grants were sharply reduced in real terms from 1987 onwards. The introduction of student loans, while not directly affecting many of our sample, who had mostly completed their student careers, was felt to be significant by careers staff in both Liverpool and Swindon. They did not, however, see it as helpful in encouraging applications from those who were concerned about finance; rather lower grants and the introduction of student loans were seen as problematic:

'putting off those young people that have good academic abilities but whose families are not financially stable'.

External support

The German system of higher education, in which no fees are charged and grants seldom awarded, relies partly upon a system of student loans. However, parental support is much more significant and the expectation of parental direct financial support in their children's education had already been established. For example, parents will buy textbooks directly for their own children throughout their schooling, rather than textbooks for the school being purchased partly through supplementation from funds raised by parents' associations as is common in England. Students in Germany have the right to apply for financial support while they are at university or *Fachoberschule*. Relatively few are eligible and the monthly sum paid on the basis of the *Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz* (BAföG) is a combination of grant and interest-free loan; which means the student pays back part of sum after entering the labour market. The financial support that a student can expect depends on the parental/family income and certain social factors (e.g. how many children live in the family) and is limited to a certain number of semesters depending on the subject. However, as Table 4.1 shows, only a minority of students receive any state support.

Table 4.1: Students receiving financial support (1985) in Germany (%)

	Total	Male	Female
None	73	72	75
Up to DM 100	1	1	1
101 - DM 200	2	2	1
201 - DM 300	2	2	2
301 - DM 400	3	3	3
401 - DM 500	3	4	3
501 - DM 600	5	6	4
601 - DM 700	5	5	5
more than DM 700	6	5	6

Source: BMBW 1986

There are strings attached to the receipt of grants, in that recognition of achievement during the course of their studies is required only from those receiving a grant. That is, they have to present requisite unit credits after four semesters to prove their studies are successful. They then qualify for a continuation of the payments. In contrast, for those not receiving a grant, unit credits or intermediate examination (*Vorprüfung*) have no value outside the university: they are not acknowledged certificates in the labour market.

Official statistics show that the proportion of students receiving financial support was notably lower after the last amendment of the Act (32.4% in 1985 as compared to 44.2% in 1982). The importance of financing by parents, therefore, increases. Parents contribute the largest part of the money available to students, followed by part-time employment and BAföG grant/loan. Due to the limitations of financial support to a maximum number of semesters, fewer students in senior semesters receive financial support. Combined with the over-crowded classes common in HE institutions this puts extra pressure on this group of students. A male student from Paderborn describes 'the possibility of receiving a BAföG grant/loan helped me to take a positive decision for university. I live on BAföG and my parents top it up. I work only two weeks a year in order to finish my course as quick as possible'. Usually, however, it is the parents who contribute most support.

In England, grants, banks and parents all figured as significant forms of external support. The grant system operating in the late 1980s meant that levels of financial support available depended not only upon the level of parental income but also upon the policy of the local authority, with Liverpool generally being less generous than Swindon, largely because Liverpool local authority was in dire financial straits during this time. Other grants, from national financial bodies, were available for some types of postgraduate study. There was also one example of a Swindon student receiving a bursary from a company. The net result was that there were quite wide variations in the samples as to how much of students' income came from grants. This ranged from nil, for a student from Liverpool, to almost £5,000 for a postgraduate student from Swindon.

Parents and banks were the most popular external means of supplementing the shortfall caused by what the students in England almost universally saw as the inadequate level of grants. Under the grant system, parents had always been expected to make up the grant with a parental contribution, the size of which depended upon their income. For a long time, parental contributions had often fallen below the expected level, but the problem was exacerbated by the falling level of grants in real terms. For a variety of reasons, parental contributions were becoming increasingly significant for students to help finance their passage through HE. Strong parental financial support, for example of over £2,000 per year for one student from Swindon, could be readily given and accepted, but it could also cause the recipient unease, as was the case with a student from Liverpool: 'I feel incredibly guilty ... at 22 years of age I feel I shouldn't really be asking for money'. This speaker was getting £400 a term from her parents and was acutely aware of her financial dependence. Her parents had encouraged her to go to university, but she was acutely aware that this involved a degree of financial sacrifice upon their part.

More generally, parental financial support seemed to depend upon their own and their parents attitudes to when they felt young people 'should pay their way' as well as ability to pay. Thus, a medical student from Swindon, making an extended student transition, felt under no pressure to make any financial contribution to help finance his studies. Indeed, the whole issue of parental financial support seemed to have not only an obvious direct influence but also an indirect influence through peer expectations about what is 'normal'. Thus, one young man from Swindon emphasised that all his immediate group of friends were going to university and that parental support while studying was similarly accepted and expected. A teacher in a Liverpool school, with an overwhelmingly middle-class catchment area, pointed to similarly strong expectations from both parents and pupils about support to continue in education (at least 20% of pupils continued their education beyond 18). In contrast, students from working-class areas in both Liverpool and Swindon seemed conscious that 'going to university' rather than going to work was unusual behaviour and therefore this required a

similarly unusual level of support from their families. Two of these students, the first from Liverpool, the second from Swindon, further mentioned the visibility of parental support at university:

> people were always talking about how much money they had ... how much money mummy and daddy were sending up for them.

> the more middle-class type person, they'd all be together. You can really tell, sort of the way they dress and the way they speak and that ... a lot of their parents are career people ... them going to university was like a matter of course really, they were going to go.

The final element in the equation of external support for students in HE comes from the banks. It could be argued that the provision and use of sizeable overdraft facilities by many students meant that a de facto student loans system operated in England even before one was officially introduced. Students from both Liverpool and Swindon emphasised the significance of overdrafts either at some stage or throughout their student careers. They invariably saw work at some stage during their student careers as being necessary to keep their overdrafts to 'manageable' proportions. Even so, bank borrowing could leave a substantial legacy:

> when I do start work I'll have to curb what I do so as to pay back the money that I owe and that. I've got quite a large overdraft which has kind of survived me through the last four years.

Working to finance HE study

Students may, of course, finance their own studies, either in part or in whole. (In neither country, however, would this extend to a responsibility to pay fees. In Germany, students do not pay fees and in England the local authorities would pay the fees.) Most students who were successful on the academic track in all four towns did not actively consider going to work before entering higher education. Indeed, the typical conception of the academic route as a series of barriers with HE as the 'prize' perhaps mitigates against a broader consideration of alternatives. One young Swindon man was fairly typical in pointing out that, having set out on the A-level route with

all his friends at sixth-form college with the intention of going to university, 'there was then no way I was going to consider anything else at 18 after I had passed my three A-levels'.

Certainly in England, some students who had gone straight into HE thought that it was desirable to go straight through the education system, and that a break from working might make it more difficult to make a transition back to being a student:

> I did not want a job. It is more difficult to study once you get the taste of money.
>
> If I'd done my O-levels then had a job, and then gone to college, I don't think I could make the adjustment very smoothly.

However, two Swindon students who did work for a year (in insurance and for a research council) prior to entry to HE found this meant they could supplement their grants without working during vacations.

Whether prospective students do actually go through with their intention of going into HE after working for a spell depends both on the nature of the work and their commitment to a chosen career path which involves HE. Thus, one young Bremen man, doing relatively well-paid alternative community service, was resolute in intending to go to university, especially as the bounded nature of the work in a hospital did not present any form of realistic career alternative. However, two young people from Paderborn, who had entered work with the intention of going into HE later, found the attractiveness of work fatally weakened their resolve. They gave up ideas of going into HE because it would have meant giving up their salary. There was clearly a labour market effect in operation in that the existence of relatively well-paid jobs and apprenticeships, particularly in banking and insurance in the more buoyant labour markets of Swindon and Paderborn, meant that it would be very much easier for prospective students to get such work than those from Bremen and Liverpool.

While some students worked prior to their studies, very many more financed or re-financed their studies through the traditional means of work during vacations: 'with grants disappearing fast,

money earned in vacations was essential, because you would not expect to be bank-rolled completely by the bank manager'. The buoyancy of the labour market clearly affected not only the ease with which it was possible to get employment, but also the type of employment available. Thus, for example, students looking for work in the vacations in Swindon had little difficulty: 'in the holidays there were jobs everywhere in Swindon. I was able to get jobs at Christmas and Easter, as well as during the summer'.

The availability of temporary work, doing either clerical or manufacturing jobs and in the secondary labour market (cleaning, working in pubs, and so on) was clearly affected by the health of the local labour market in England. Thus in Liverpool, competition for such work not only came from the large number of unemployed, but also it was less likely that people would be just using such work as a temporary stage (Heinz, 1990; Brown and Behrens, 1991). By contrast, Swindon students generally found it quite easy to get reasonably well-paid clerical jobs, for example in insurance and local government, or to get work in production, which was less well paid by the hour but afforded opportunities for overtime. This was all dependent upon Swindon's status as a boom town, which all changed in late 1990: 'when I came back last Christmas, there was absolutely nothing. The bubble had burst. Swindon was boom and bust'.

While the boom lasted, however, the shortage of high-level skills meant that science and engineering students could also find work which made use of their technical skills: for example, in systems administration, laboratory work or production control. Indeed, some local companies offered bursaries to students, doing degree studies or even A-levels, and coupled these with opportunities for vacation employment. One recipient saw the opportunity for such work as equally important as the £500 per year bursary: 'I never had to look for vacation work, I just wrote to Chemco saying when I could start and when I would finish. I worked in the R&D labs'.

Ten of the Swindon sample had entered higher education, and only two of these had never worked and had registered as unemployed during the summer. Significantly, neither of these were looking for work in Swindon, both had reasonable incomes when

grant and family support were included, and both were embarked on relatively lengthy student careers: one was a London medical student and the other was studying for her doctorate.

Access to relatively well-paid vacation employment not only could have significance in financing a student career, but also, for those with clear career goals, could be very useful in the search for work upon completion of studies. That is, it could be used to demonstrate the ability to apply skills and abilities honed in education and, just as importantly, to demonstrate commitment to a chosen career. Such values could also, however, be demonstrated through full-time work during the course of studies. One student from Swindon was doing a sandwich course, where the sandwich year involved substantive work in a company. The pay earned (£8,000) as a production engineer for a company making temperature and process controllers was used to clear the accumulated debts of the two previous years. Another student, who was part-financing himself, studied for two years and then 'took a year out ... working with semi-conductors in the company's R&D [research and development] labs', before going back to complete his degree. Such instances represented an ideal in that immediate financial concerns and longer-term career goals could be addressed, and in addition both students highlighted the value of having been part of modern industrial processes in their subsequent return to study.

Such harmonious coincidences of financial, educational and career goals were, however, relatively rare. In many more cases, the need to address financial concerns was taken largely in isolation from any educational or longer-term considerations. This was particularly the case with students taking part-time work. Such work could range from Saturday jobs through to occasional night work. One young Liverpool man indicated, fairly typically, that because his grant was not much, he used to regulate how much work he did so as to try to balance his finances: 'when I was a student, I used to work nights in a bakery ... usually only one night a week, but sometimes a couple of nights a week'.

In England, the relatively speedy student transitions did mean that for undergraduates at least, it was relatively rare for part-time work to slow progress towards a degree. In contrast, lengthy transi-

tions and periods of work often went together for German students. The working, however, was not always the cause of the lengthy transition. Indeed the reverse was often the case. The lack of government financial support, the German modular system in university courses and the overpopulation of the universities, which results in long waiting periods in order to get access to core modules, all mean that a large majority of students have to look for work. In many cases this turns into a vicious circle: studies take longer than anticipated – work in order to earn one's living – less time to study – work slows progress towards a degree. The two students in our sample who worked during the semester only found jobs unrelated to their courses.

Thus, one young woman from Bremen, who was training to be a teacher, worked in a supermarket:

> With roughly one-third I was supported by my parents and the other two thirds I financed myself through a job... During the semester I work 20 hours per week, during the vacations full time... When I first started university it was very difficult. I had to get to know the university and the course, wanted to meet fellow students but it was difficult because I didn't have the time ... I was frightened to lose the money and this security, the financial security.

A male mechanical engineering student from Paderborn received half his monthly income from his mother. He worked as a lorry driver 30 hours a month, during normal working hours, to earn the rest of his living. Being asked how he could combine his studies and work he answered 'just about'.

Overall in both countries, many of those who were students voiced very strong expressions of dissatisfaction about their current standard of living. In England, this was often coupled with trenchant criticisms of government policy on education generally, and its policies towards student grants and loans in particular.

Discussion

In both countries the extent of parental financial support is becoming increasingly critical to the financing of student status. Those with significant parental financial support can focus upon other aspects of managing student status, but for those without such support financial issues can become the dominant concern. The attrition of those with the capability but not the resources to benefit from HE, both before and during their student career, should be a major public policy concern.

In England, it is public policy to increase HE participation rates (DES, 1991a) and these have risen rapidly (DES, 1991b). Hence, it may seem inevitable that this will result in wider access to HE by under-represented groups. Certainly, the current record rates of application to HE at the time of a demographic downturn in the number of 18–20 year olds might make it appear at first sight as if HE must now be attracting students with a wider range of social class backgrounds. In fact, the number of young people from higher social class backgrounds, from whom the bulk of HE entrants are drawn, has held up (Smithers and Robinson, 1989) so that the challenge of getting substantially more working-class young people into HE has not yet been faced (Jesson and Gray, 1989).

Finance would appear to be a key influence in this respect in two ways. First, the increasing short-term costs of higher education may be much more readily apparent to those individuals and families with lower incomes: several of the case histories attested to this. Second, if there is a buoyant local labour market then the immediate benefits foregone by not going to work at 16 or 18 are also much greater. Certainly, this appeared to influence individuals' decisions from working-class families in Swindon. From our previous work only 6 of the 40 young people initially on academic tracks were from working-class backgrounds, yet they comprised 58% of the total sample of 160 (Bynner and Roberts, 1991).

This is not a current issue in many English areas, including Swindon, because of the depressed youth labour market, but it does suggest that any easing of employment prospects, especially for 18 year olds, may reduce the prospects of the government targets for

increased HE participation rates being met (DES, 1991a). That is, the removal of a negative reason to go into higher education (the absence of reasonable alternatives) will perhaps need to be balanced by making HE study relatively more attractive in some way when the economy recovers. The realisation of still higher participation rates may also depend upon curricular reform (Ball, 1991), the construction of more varied routes into HE (Smithers and Robinson, 1989), but is clear that young people in both countries have also become highly conscious of the costs of going into HE.

HE participation rates in Germany (BMBW, 1991a) are already considerably higher than in England and there is also a wider range of other education and training opportunities. This should not obscure, however, that German universities too are faced with differentiated patterns of access. (The hugely over-crowded situation in most universities means that this is not necessarily seen as a major policy issue at this time.) Not only is course choice often very gender-stereotyped according to a careers counsellor for *Abiturienten* from Bremen:

> It is like it always was: women take languages, social subjects, maybe economics, but when it comes to natural science or engineering – just men.

But also application rates to universities are stratified socially:

> There are *Abiturienten* from certain areas who all want to go to university, whereas their counterparts from other parts of the city compete for apprenticeships.

Many of the latter take this route because they see it as a 'safe' option, not least in financial terms, but discover later that they would have been better off in the longer term to have gained more academic qualifications. Subsequent entry to HE, particularly to *Fachhochschulen*, may allow them to redress the problem to some extent. However, later entry to HE makes prospective graduates vulnerable to the more general phenomenon that extended transitions of German students can become a test of endurance for those without substantive parental support. As a result, attrition of student

numbers over time can often be for financial rather than educational reasons.

Despite the lack of financial governmental support for students, the number of school-leavers entering HE straight after school and those entering HE after an apprenticeship is rising constantly. In the 1970s, graduates faced strong competition among each other in the labour market because of the changing structure in the education system (more pupils in the *Gymnasium*: Roth, 1975) and rising unemployment. Nowadays, however, there exists a great demand for graduates and it seems that promising future career prospects help to overcome the present difficulties. Timmermann (1991) concludes:

> the future lack of graduates will lead – although structural discrepancies have to be conceded in the labour market for graduates – to better employment perspectives for this group in the 90s. (Timmermann, 1991: 263)

A survey on students (BMBW, 1986) shows that school-leavers from families with lower incomes are the first to do without HE. Similar to the situation in England, the demographic downturn has not affected the aggregate number of HE entrants. Despite all official statements, the challenge of getting more working-class young people into HE has not yet been faced and therefore no changes in the loan system are to be expected.

Overall, each country could benefit from reflection on issues affecting the other in the relation of finance to access and progression in HE. Certainly, within the German system the short-term financial advantage of leaving the route leading to higher education at any early stage is much less than in England. With virtually all young people in education and training till 18, and apprenticeship rates being much closer to training rates than youth wages, then the pressures are all upon achieving the highest school-leaving certificate possible. The lesson for England would then appear to be that to get more people eligible to enter HE, then issues of coherence, progression and finance have to be tackled for the population of young adults as a whole.

With progression within HE, the positions are reversed. The speed of English transitions, typically three years, means that for those who have decided that they can afford to enter HE, there is a clear end-point in view. Students may accumulate considerable debts along the way, but graduation remains a fixed point for most students and others (for example, lenders). In contrast, the length of time that German students take to complete a typical university degree is not only greater, but also in itself may lead to still longer transitions. The lesson for Germany would then appear to be that clear bounded signals should be given about achievement in specified time frames, this might act to speed student progression and transitions. Indeed, the minority of students receiving a grant (BAföG) are already working under such a regime, with the continuation of the grant available being tied to the speed of progress towards a degree.

More radically perhaps, both countries could reassess their expectations of 'full-time' students. In England, institutions could recognise that significant numbers of students will have to work contemporaneously to finance their studies and consider the implications this could have for all aspects of the curriculum they offer. In Germany, the converse would hold: rather than the open-ended injunction to take the final qualification when students are ready, a clearer negotiated timetable which recognises medium-term achievement rather than in the long term would be desirable. Whether these are attempted, it should be recognised that financial issues need to be considered from the outset when formulating or reviewing policies towards HE access and progression. Furthermore, they need to be considered in the context of education and training policy for young adults as a whole, not as a separate subset of issues.

CHAPTER V

Transition behaviour and the development of careers

Introduction

This chapter looks at ways in which the transition from school to employment was experienced, subjectively, by our sample. It is based principally on the 16 interviews conducted with young people in Bremen, and the 16 conducted in Liverpool. The names given to the 32 people for the purposes of the book, their trajectory allocation, and a brief description of their careers can be found in Appendix III. Reference is made from time to time to the survey data and to the experiences of individuals in Swindon and Paderborn.

While many of the experiences are typical of post-adolescent transition processes in industrialised countries, we were interested in how far differences in the social expectations and cultural contexts in England and Germany were influencing these processes and producing different outcomes. In particular, we wanted to find out whether the institutional framework of transition in Germany contributed to passive or to pro-active transition behaviours and the extent to which the less institutionalised labour-market-led English context might be encouraging risk-taking opportunity-oriented behaviour.

Our cases showed different types of career behaviours: long-term and 'strategic', short-term and opportunity-oriented, and those which rely heavily on chance, and how different national contexts reinforce, encourage or discourage certain types of behaviour.

Long-term plans

Career patterns develop from an interplay of individual motives and transition structures, i.e. labour market conditions, support services and institutional provisions. Regarding the dynamic nature of this process, one might argue that the concept of a career strategy is

inapplicable to most adolescents, and alien to the young people themselves. Young people 'keep their options open', chance and circumstance play an important role in careers. While this may be generally true, there did appear to be young people among our interviewees who could be said to have a strategic approach to their careers. They had a long-term aim in view and they stuck steadily to their goal, refusing to be diverted from it. In addition they had a conception of how their developing career would fit in with their general life perspective as a whole.

A particularly clear example of this is *Christiane*. Not only did she know, apparently since the age of five (when she was given a medical chest for a present), what she wanted to become, but also she pursued this aim consistently and refused to be diverted from it. Her 'occupational choice' (nurse), however, is exemplary for the restricted labour market for women (see Chapter III). *Christiane* was 19 years old when the interview was conducted and worked as a student nurse in a Bremen hospital. In the year before she finished school she went on two practical placements, one in a hospital, the other one in an old people's home. These placements strengthened her desire to become a nurse and she sent in five applications at the end of her ninth year, one of which was successful. As she was too young to begin training right away she did a preparatory course for nurses, which in fact was not concerned with nursing but with looking after old people. The law was changed, however, to allow training to begin at 17 rather than 18, and after a few months of her preparatory course *Christiane* was able to start her training right away. After six months of her training, which she found 'really great', *Christiane* nevertheless failed her initial examination. Refusing to be 'cooled-out' by the *Arbeitsamt*, and turning down the offer of a place on the railways suggested by her father, himself a railway employee, she took up the offer of the hospital to take up her training again in six months' time. In the meantime she took up a six months practical placement in a hospital in Emsland, which she felt enabled her to increase her pace of work considerably. Having restarted her training, she passed her first examination without any difficulty.

Christiane appeared to be absolutely committed to her work and the question of passing the examination in two years has top priority in her life. Although she was still detached from the idea of having a boy-friend, she had an elaborated concept of how to combine having children and working later on. *Christiane* was clear that she wanted to be a nurse engaged in practical contact with patients on wards. She did not want to go beyond a ward sister, and become involved in administration or teaching. Her nursing career was also already integrated in her mind with future family commitments. After her training was completed, she intended to work for five or six years and then start a family, but she wanted to continue to work, as a night sister:

> Its really quite good. The child will sleep during the night and then my husband or boy-friend or whoever will be there, and then during the day I'll be there myself.

Christiane wanted to combine her family and professional plans. *Christiane* was clearly acting according to an occupational, and indeed a life strategy, and was undeterred by 'failure', which became only a temporary set-back.

Another case illustrating a strategic approach to career development is *Steffen*, who had 'always' wanted to be a cook. He also had fairly clear ideas about his future to the extent that he hoped to travel abroad and widen his experience of foreign cuisines, as well as seeing something of the world. Despite enjoying his profession, however, *Steffen* was also clear that he did not want to be a cook all his life: 'Somehow there's something missing, I think I don't want to stay a cook all my life. If I'm still at the stove when I'm 40 or 45, I will have missed something'.

Steffen was very interested in classical music: he played several instruments and was taking lessons in opera singing. He could not really imagine himself becoming a professional musician however, as he assessed the opportunities in that field as very limited. He was considering instead to get his *Fachoberschule* (FOS) leaving certificate in order to improve his education and to have the possibility of moving eventually into another career, although he was unsure

which one. After his *Zivildienst* (community service) his intention was to work as a cook and then to look around: 'I have not got my life planned out in so far as I can say I'm going to do such and such for 30 or 40 years and then retire'.

There is an element here of 'keeping one's options open', of waiting to see what will turn up, of being prepared to try something else. In Liverpool, *Cathy*, who always wanted to be, and became, a teacher, and *Brian*, who eventually succeeded in becoming a professional musician, were also goal-oriented in pursuing their ambitions.

Grasping opportunities

This second type of career behaviour involves dealing with successive tasks or problems of qualification which come up in the transition. One moves on from a task successfully completed to the next stage, without necessarily having a final goal in view. Such a way of proceeding might itself be a strategy, a general way of approaching problems, if the use of the term in this context were not misleading. It exemplifies the Italian phrase, *a scalino a scalino si sala la scala*, the stairs are mounted step by step. The career pattern which most closely approximates to this ideal type is that of *Bernd*. He travelled quite a distance from *Hauptschule* to university entrance and describes his career progressions as follows:

> I would say everything fell before my feet, so to speak. That began in the *Hauptschule* when the teacher said to me, here just take a look at this brochure BFS [*Berufsfachschule*] ... two years, you can also make up your *Realschule* leaving certificate – I went down there. Well now in this class I learnt that there was this next course BFS/q. Admittedly, some of them said it's difficult, very difficult. I thought I'll have a go. When I was there I found no difficulty with it at all. Then at the end of this course some people came up suddenly with the idea of FOS [*Fachoberschule*] and so on, *Fachabitur*. Well I thought *Fachabitur*, you can do that as well. It only lasts a year, it will soon get past, let's see how it goes. It was also supposed to be difficult, I had heard. Well, when I was there,

> I didn't find it so hard. I found that everything was easy for me to learn and such. And then I knew also that I can go on to university entrance and study. I thought: yes you should do that as well. This is how I got on to this path ... I really didn't consider too much what I could really do, I just took the opportunity. *Fachabitur* is good and then you can go on.

Bernd did not set out with a definite goal in view. He successfully completed a task and then moved on to the next stage. In the process, however, ideas about a possible career began to take more definite shape. While waiting to go into the air force for his military training after graduation, *Bernd* took a job as an electrician, but did not find it very exciting. He disliked the monotony and the lack of prospects. It became important to him not to do a job which was below his capacities, and a job that required little qualification did not satisfy him. *Bernd*'s intentions were to do his military service, which he also regarded as useful since he was going to work as a radio technician, and then to study automation technology at the Bremen polytechnic. *Bernd* described himself as someone who seized opportunities without thinking about them in advance. He thus combined a passivity in terms of searching for opportunities with a readiness to take a chance. All his career moves had been brought to his attention by others, his teacher and friends at college, but he displayed persistence and energy in following them through to a successful conclusion.

There was no other case quite like that of *Bernd* among the Bremen and Liverpool interviewees, but *Steve*, *Laura* and *John* in Liverpool, who were all in trajectory I and were or had been at polytechnic (HE college in *John*'s case), show attitudes which fit them into this career pattern. All of them had gone to polytechnic or college without any clear idea of what they wanted to become. Indeed none of them was certain at the time of interview. Polytechnic was the next logical stage in their careers in terms of acquiring more qualifications; perhaps it was also a way of postponing career decisions. *John*, for instance, had had no definite plans or conceptions of going to college. Having got appropriate grades at A-level he made the decision quickly:

I didn't really have any expectations because I applied late. It all happened very fast, my exams came and the results and college all came within a few months. I didn't really have any expectations at all.

Steve and *Laura* did have the idea of pursuing higher education, but it was an idea put to them by other people. *Steve* was influenced by his squash partners to do A-levels, but there were other sources of influence as well:

I still haven't any clear idea of what I want to do. Well I mean, when I was at school I wanted to be a photographer and it was going to leave school, but I ended up deciding to do A-levels and then after that I didn't know what I wanted to do so I did a degree and after that I still didn't know what I wanted to do... And I supposed it was while I was doing A-levels I thought yeah, well, I might as well do a degree, sort of you know.

Laura had not known what she wanted to do at school. She knew what she did not want, to become a nurse like her mother. Her father had put pressure on her to stay on at school and do A-levels. In terms of her degree course *Laura* made her own choice and her parents had no influence on her. She chose business studies and Spanish: 'I wasn't really sure what I wanted to do, so to keep my options open I decided to do a business course and I did want to keep my languages up'. Looking back over her whole process of qualifications, *Laura* sounded very much like *Steve*:

It's like now I always knew from my O-levels that I would do my A-levels, from my A-levels I'd do my degree, and then from my degree I just don't know what I'm going to do, and it's the end now so it's...

A contrast to these young people is provided by *Doris*, who had considered further study but had rejected it because she didn't really know what she would do with her degree. She knew two girls who went to university anyway, but then quit and started an apprenticeship. *Doris*'s consequence is clear: 'I think I don't need to study if I have no goal'.

It is perhaps significant that three out of four English young people interviewed in trajectory I acted according to this pattern of taking the next step in a conventional progression, without really knowing what they wanted to do. The English educational system enforces specialisation on young people at an early age, 16 or earlier, at a time when comparatively few young people have a clear idea of future careers. While few Germans had fully crystallised ideas, it is worth noting that all German youngsters at the end of secondary education have to do a practical placement, which is intended to give them some idea of the world of work and to confirm or weaken existing inclinations. The value of this has been theoretically recognised in Britain, and there have been various initiatives to promote a similar scheme in British schools.

Taking chances

A third type of career activity is one in which chances and risks seem to play a big role. Such careers can be illustrated by the cases of *Michael* and *William*. *Michael* had been working for Liverpool City Corporation as a transport clerk. Following a long strike of municipal dustmen the council decided to put out its contract for rubbish disposal to tender. It accepted the tender of a French-owned firm and made many of its own workers redundant. A wholesale reorganisation of council employees followed. *Michael* was then offered the possibility of training to become a qualified civil engineer, an opportunity he accepted with alacrity.

William was offered an apprenticeship by a friend at a time when his career was going nowhere in particular. He had started as an apprentice video engineer but had left after two-and-a-half years when he felt he was being used only for delivering equipment rather than learning to fix it. After a short term of unemployment, he worked for two weeks in a food factory, filling cooking oil into cans. He quit for the monotony and bad work conditions. A placement on an ET scheme as a joiner wasn't successful because he got asthma from the sawdust. After another short term of unemployment he was offered an apprenticeship as an electrician which he was determined to finish.

These cases do not seem to require extended commentary. It is self-evident, however, that these young men must have impressed their employer sufficiently to have been offered these opportunities, and we can therefore postulate a fair amount of self-confidence. This seems to be borne out in these two cases. *William* had many sporting interests, he had a steady girl-friend who was expecting his child, and he described his relationship with his family as very supportive: 'My mum and dad and my sisters. All my family, we're a close family, very close'. He also described his general orientation to problems in a positive way: 'little problems I keep it inside of me. I'm not a worrier. Don't worry about nothing. If something happens, I sort it out myself'.

Michael also had good relations with his parents, and was married with a child. He was keen on sport and played football regularly. He described how he had grown in self-confidence over the years since leaving school. Both *William* and *Michael* seemed to have very positive self-esteem and were well integrated in the kinship network.

A comparable case from Bremen is *Norbert*, who started three apprenticeships and was taken on each time with his first application. He, too, had experienced efficient network support and seems to have a fair amount of self-confidence that emanates from activities outside the working sphere: playing music and acting. We shall return to him later.

Changing perspectives, rising aspirations

Finally, we find some careers which are difficult to classify because of their complexity. They involve the gradual development of a kind of career strategy after some initial uncertainty and groping around, but this strategy itself still includes the idea of keeping options open. Perhaps due to different institutional settings, we found this pattern only among the German youngsters, namely in the cases of *Manfred* and *Klaus*. These young men were particularly thoughtful and reflective about their careers. They also seemed capable of taking

the good and the bad in their occupational experience together and of integrating it within a positive self-image.

Manfred had left school (*Gymnasium*) without taking his *Abitur*. He then took a manual job in a hotel for three or four days a week, which he found very hard work. Ten months later he gave up this job and went to do his military service, after which he decided to do an apprenticeship and sought advice from the *Arbeitsamt*. He applied for an apprenticeship with an optician, without success, and eventually got a training position in the wholesale and export trade, and was just about to complete his training.

He thought it was 'difficult to go wrong in business' and he would thus have a secure financial basis. *Manfred* chose a form of training with a strong theoretical component in which he attended *Berufsschule* for two days a week, spent a further day at the BBI (the training institute related to the *Angestelltenkammer* or chamber of white-collar employees), and only two days a week at his firm, a paper wholesaler. He stated that the firm was very keen to employ him. He had decided, though, not to take up a job with them, but to pursue his studies further. His intention was to go to college and get his *Abitur*, and then to go to the university: 'I can get my *Abitur* in two years ... if I go to the university at 24 or so, I won't feel myself to be old'. *Manfred* looked back on his occupational training and experiences with mixed feelings. His work in the hotel had been hard and unrewarding, but

> Looking at it this was an important experience because you were really at the bottom (*ganz unten*) there, you were of no account (*das Letzte*), you noticed in the evening that you had been working ... so that was already a new insight that one had gained.

His training in the paper firm he also found difficult at times. He experienced an increasing alienation from the firm and the business world. His theoretical training, however, had been rewarding:

> it is only through the training that I have the knowledge and idea what studying can do for me, not just in respect of a career goal but simply for myself, what I want to know or where my interests lie.

Klaus had been unable to develop clear conceptions of a career at school: he thought that counselling received at school had come too early to be of much use to him. He had gone for advice to the *Arbeitsamt* and had taken an aptitude test. At the bottom of a list of possible occupations he received, the hotel trade was suggested. He did a practical placement in a hotel and because of the variety of the work he enjoyed it very much. He therefore decided to apply for a training place; he applied about 20 times but without success and then decided to go to *Berufsfachschule* for two years.

His training here was purely theoretical, and although he had enjoyed it, he did not think that it had been very useful to him. After *Berufsfachschule, Klaus* eventually got an apprenticeship in a Bremen hotel. *Klaus* criticised this training because he had been used primarily as cheap labour, and was put to work where there was the greatest demand. He feels not to have received systematic training in all departments of the hotel business. *Klaus* reports that such practice was quite common and the source of many complaints, but that even the chamber of commerce was unable to do anything about it. He also found the 'impossible' hours of work a negative aspect of his training, and soon discovered that it was difficult for him to maintain his friendships outside the workplace. He regarded his apprenticeship as a kind of 'character training'. It was necessary to bring it to a successful conclusion and to do so required initiative, self-confidence and self-discipline.

Having completed his training, *Klaus* had decided not to take up a position right away but had 'fled' into the *Fachoberschule*. In his view this offered an opportunity for reflection. It was a qualifying institution enabling him to get further academic qualifications which would be useful in his career, but at the same time it offered the possibility of withdrawing from working life and thinking seriously about the future. Having obtained his certificate from the college, *Klaus* was in fact considering an alternative career as a policeman. Another 'moratorium' was facing him in that he was waiting to be called up to the army for his national service. *Klaus* viewed this coming period not just as a moratorium, but as an opportunity to test out the career of policeman, in so far as he was going to do his national service in the military police. He could also

imagine continuing to work in the hotel trade, however, which he was finding better the longer he was away from it. *Klaus* appeared to be very self-confident, and despite the negative aspects of his training and his uncertainty over his future career, felt that he had achieved a good deal. He had developed many positive qualities: initiative, trust in himself and persistence. He knew also that he had achieved a definite qualification which he could always fall back on.

The careers of these two young men illustrate a process of developing aspirations which rested on the security of achieved success in vocational training. Their prospects were supported and enhanced by educational and training institutions, which made it possible to try out detours and have 'moratoria' without too great a social cost, indeed with considerable benefit to the persons concerned. At the same time, from the biographical point of view, the considerable maturity of judgement and perception of *Manfred* and *Klaus*, expressed not merely about their careers, but also in reflections on their family life and on different kinds of institutions, and which there is not space to detail here, tends to suggest that in terms of developing confidence and a positive self-concept there is much to be said for a variety of training experiences.

Bad jobs, schemes and dole

We have looked at different types of career behaviour with basically successful outcomes. We now turn to less fortunate transitions. One might say that we can discover analogies to the successful transitions in terms of activities, but that the young people concerned have been blocked or frustrated in some way: by lack of qualifications, negative attitudes to education, lack of prospects, health problems, difficult family circumstances, or a combination of such factors. One of them is *Conni*, whom we would like to introduce in some detail.

Conni was attending a scheme in Bremen where basic clerical skills were taught. In conversation with the interviewers after the formal interview was over, it emerged that she had been brought up

by her grandparents since the age of two and that her mother was an alcoholic, and probably a prostitute. When she was 11 her mother was sentenced to several years in prison and died of cancer shortly after her release. In the interview, *Conni* described her situation by saying that 'relations are always strained (*belastet*) at home'.

She was living with her grandparents, her aunt and the latter's husband and small son. She described her aunt as a 'battle-axe' and said that her relations with her were always on a war-footing. The situation had become exacerbated when the grandparents had gone on a long journey. Her aunt had given *Conni* notice to quit and she had to leave at the end of the year. Her grandparents were not very sympathetic to her either. They had put her under pressure to take up an apprenticeship as soon as possible: 'Yes, they were always saying, at your age we were already working, why don't you do something'. *Conni* had started training as a sales girl in a large butcher's shop but she had not liked the job, largely because of unsympathetic superiors. She described herself as going to work in the morning trembling from head to foot. She had tried another place in a family-owned butcher's shop but hadn't liked that either. When she had given up this second apprenticeship her grandparents were very annoyed. Since then she had done various courses at the *Berufsfachschule* and now was doing a basic commercial course with a practical placement in a lawyer's office. Her grandparents had offered her another flat, which they owned, but expected her to pay the full commercial rent of DM 470 a month (£160).

Conni's only social support in terms of relationships seemed to consist of another aunt, who was sympathetic to her and had offered her a temporary place to live, and a friend whom she had met on her course. She was quite satisfied with her treatment at the *Arbeitsamt*, however, and seemed to appreciate the efforts which they had made on her behalf. *Conni*'s home situation had been, and was, very difficult for her, and she faced an uncertain future with very little social support.

Both *Conni* and *Katrin*, a Bremen hairdresser who was unemployed at the time of the interview, were quite clear what they wanted to become: *Conni* wanted to work with or look after animals (*Tierpflegerin*), and *Katrin* wanted to be a florist. Both these profes-

sions are popular ones among girls, but there is little supply of training places. Both girls suffered in this competition from having no more than the *Hauptschule* leaving certificate. *Katrin*'s second choice had been to work with children in a *Kindergarten*, but the *Arbeitsamt* had been equally discouraging about this choice:

> What can you do as a *Hauptschule* student, I would have liked to do something with children, I always found that really great, but to get into a *Kindergarten*, you can forget that.

Both girls had also developed skin problems, which in theory would have prevented them from following the occupations they favoured. As a florist, *Katrin* would have had to work with chemicals; as an assistant working with animals, *Conni* would have had to use shampoos and disinfectants and come into contact with hair and fur, but she asserted that if she had an opportunity to work with animals she would take it despite the consequences. Both girls also seemed to lack family support to pursue their chosen career. *Conni* was pressured by her grandparents to take up an apprenticeship in the meat trade. *Katrin*'s lack of parental support was not so obvious, but her parents made it clear to her that she should make the best of what was available to her, as they had had to do. It is clearly not enough then to have an occupational goal in view: means must be found to realise it, and in these cases this seemed to be beyond the capacity of these young women, given their lack of formal qualifications and the gate-keeping of the *Arbeitsamt*, and perhaps insufficient support from the family. It was clear in both cases that the occupations they were pursuing were 'lesser evils', perhaps even the last resort for staying in the qualification system.

Tracy, from our English sample, is someone who simply took the next step in front of her and thereby landed herself one, but a job with no prospects. She lacked the self-confidence to break away and try something new, but she was also trapped in her job by her commitment to her family and by the lack of opportunities on the local labour market. *Tracy*'s story of finding a job is phrased in rather negative terms. Her decision of doing office work was not one by preference. She just wouldn't have known anything else to do:

> Yeah, the only thing I was any good at in school was English and typing, so it had to be something like that. So that's what I went in for... Then this came up and I just thought, oh well, I'll just do that really.

Tracy did not have a very positive view of herself or much self-confidence. She dismissed an O-level success, putting it down to chance: 'Government, economics and commerce. I don't know how I got it though, but I got it ... I think it was because I was the only girl in the class at the time'. She was uncertain about leaving Liverpool: 'I don't know what I'd do now ... I'm not sure what I'd do now if I wanted to leave Liverpool. I'm not sure where I'd go'.

Tracy had a boy-friend and expressed a desire to live with him, but felt she was not ready for it yet. Above all, *Tracy* seemed to be keen on security, which made an unsatisfying situation preferable to taking a risk: 'I'm scared to fail at something, instead of getting stuck without a job lined up, stick to what's secure'. *Tracy* gave the impression that she always had to do things she didn't like and that there was nothing she could do about it. In this context it is worth noting that *Tracy* had a negative view of her school experiences:

> I never liked school that much actually. It was okay in the last few years but in the beginning I just couldn't wait to go into the seniors. I didn't like it all ... I didn't think what we were doing made that much sense really. I like I was never very good at maths anyway, but all they ever made you do was maths [*sic*] and I don't use it, I don't see the point of learning it.

Alan was also someone who had taken what was in front of him and had stuck to it for reasons of security although he would have liked some other kind of work. Like *Conni*, he had an interest in working with animals.

Alan had been placed in a carpet warehouse through his YTS course, and after two years of training he was kept on. He had stuck with the job for another three years despite finding it unsatisfactory. He had been made redundant by the new manager after the old owner retired. *Alan* had been unemployed for more or less a year at the time of the interview, claiming social security and doing casual

jobs, often at his old workplace. He also underestimated his qualifications and criticised his former work situation:

> You didn't have to use your brain really ... it was mostly lifting and carrying and that ... all I was doing was just saving the job from day one ... you're really just kept at the bottom.

At the age of 21, *Alan*'s situation on the labour market was quite unpleasant. He didn't expect much help from the Jobcentre and stated that they preferred 16 year olds who were prepared to work for very little money. Despite asserting that he had a good relationship with his mother and mentioning mates and drinking companions, *Alan* obviously felt himself to be socially isolated:

> I take my dog out for a walk, that's it. I just take the dog out all day, there's nothing else to do ... it's my only friend at the moment. That's the only thing I'd be sorry for leaving Liverpool for, poor dog would miss me.

Alan's reactions to unemployment had been quite violent at times, such as destroying a door at home and beating up another person. Talking about it was clearly a painful subject for him although he tried to conceal it by making jokes. In five years' time, he would like to be 'aiming towards marriage and having kids and that' but he is unsure about his perspectives: 'I wouldn't like to think of that where it's heading: no jobs and no prospects. I'd have to do a bank job, and not get caught'.

Taking what presents itself in front of one seems to be an unsatisfactory approach in the long run when this concerns a job without prospects in a depressed labour market. An extreme example is *Sven*: in his case it is very difficult to use the concept of a career at all, because he has moved through a chaotic transition. When he was asked whether he had had any advice on careers at school, he replied: 'Yes, we had that once with a teacher, but I didn't bother my head about it, and then I got out of it right away, I said I'm going home'.

Sven, whose biography was difficult to reconstruct, appears to have left school at 15 or 16 and gone to work in a petrol station for

about one-and-a-half years. He enjoyed this job, it was the only positively described work situation in his interview. He then left for a course as an automechanic at a *Berufsschule*, but soon lost interest in it and took up a place in the training scheme where his brother was 'working'. After some time *Sven* was dismissed for regularly turning up to work late and not behaving properly. He did not agree with these reasons for his dismissal and claimed that it was because of the introduction of CNC (computer numerical control) machines which he was unable to use. He was then unemployed for one-and-a-half years: during that time he stole cars, motorbikes and bicycles and broke into houses. He was caught and fined.

At the end of this period he returned to the same workshop, at the former job creation scheme. He was doing the same tasks as the first time, which casts some doubt on his own reasons for his former dismissal. *Sven* declared that his intention was to save up money and get an apprenticeship. According to his own statement, however, he had had the possibility of an apprenticeship during his first period in the workshop, but had turned it down because of not receiving enough money. An option of working as a dustman like his father was not possible because he had not completed an apprenticeship. He was, however, looking forward to his military service and stated that he would forget about an apprenticeship and go straight to the military if he received notification. Apart from his period at the petrol station, the only positive mention of work in *Sven*'s interview was his statement that he would like to do welding, but that this was impossible for him because of his poor qualifications. One might argue that *Sven*'s occupational career is perhaps better seen in terms of a way of coping with life which is specific to a depressed social milieu, rather than being the result of an individual processes of decision-making.

While *Sven* still enjoyed some institutional support through his scheme, including considerable financial benefit, only Liverpool provided us with several examples of 'pure' unemployment, one of them being *Anthony*. On leaving school, *Anthony* had become an apprentice plasterer. He had left before the end of his first year as he had had no time off work. His superiors had told him that if he wanted a holiday there'd be no place for him in the firm. Since then

he had been unemployed for five years. He occasionally did labouring, plastering or decorating jobs for friends, but otherwise had nothing to do. Even these odd jobs made him feel dissatisfied:

> I've done a few stints like labouring for like the lads I used to work with, but it makes you just feel bad... I mean we all started off leaving school together, they've all got jobs.

Anthony started an ET scheme but left again when he felt discouraged about his job prospects right in the beginning:

> There was about 20 of us, and he said you'll probably just get the one of you taken on and the rest of you will just have to try ... but that put me down as well ... I just didn't go back like.

Anthony had the possibility of going to college for a year to learn plastering and then trying for another apprenticeship, but he seemed so depressed by this situation that he lacked the initiative to do anything about it: 'I'd like to go back to college, I don't know what's stopping me from going, it's just actually getting off there to go and enrol'. He still thought he had a future as a plasterer despite problems in the construction industry: 'but the plastering aspect of it doesn't ever seem to go down'.

The next case in the line of people hit hard by unemployment was *Linda,* who had been unemployed for 15 months at the time of our interview. She found it 'hard living on the dole, very hard'. *Linda* stressed the financial difficulties of being unemployed. After giving her mother £15 per week she had only £30 pounds to live on for a fortnight:

> After you buy your toiletries and say you need a new pair of shoes you've got to save that fifteen pounds till you get your next Giro and then like go out and buy a decent pair of shoes or a decent pair of trainers. I'm forever borrowing and paying back.

Alan had been unemployed more or less for 12 months. He had worked at a carpet warehouse as part of a YTS scheme and was taken on afterwards. He worked there full time for four years, then the owner retired and the manager took over. *Alan* did not get along

so well with the manager and was employed by him only on a casual basis, while he was claiming social security. Despite his lack of enthusiasm for the job at the warehouse, which he saw as hard, badly paid and without prospects, *Alan* found unemployment very difficult to cope with. He also mentioned financial problems, the constant need to borrow and pay back money, the restrictions on social life caused by lack of money. He also stressed the depression resulting from unemployment and the lack of structure to one's day:

> Takes about a month like a holiday, just get out of bed at about ten o'clock, eleven o'clock. Didn't have to worry about work the next day. Then I went through a phase of staying up all night, sitting up all night and going to bed in the morning, about eight o'clock in the morning, and get up about four and stay up straight through again. ... nothing to do, bored.

His depression had led him to act violently at home:

> yeah does get you down ... one day ... I was going upstairs, just used to stay in my room then, I couldn't open the door ... I just got this mad rush of like anger and just booted the door through, a glass door, I nearly chopped me foot off. That cost me twelve quid to get it fixed so I never done it again. That's the way it gets you though.

There were no comparable examples in the Bremen sample, not only because the labour market was less depressed than the Liverpool labour market but also because the opportunities were different. *Katrin*, who was unemployed at the time of interview, would probably be entitled for retraining; *Sven* and *Conni*, who were in the least favourable position in the Bremen sample, were both still attending remedial schemes with the opportunity of taking further qualifications or even doing a full training subsequently to their present schemes. In the future, though, they will have to take risks and they have to overcome prejudice among trainers and employers.

Looking at young people in precarious situations, we found the overwhelming majority of our cases in Liverpool. Gender doesn't make much difference as far as unemployment is concerned, but

those in unrewarding jobs were all female. Trajectory III and IV people are more likely to end up in precarious situations than those in trajectories I or II; nevertheless, we had two young people with a university degree in Liverpool who were unemployed and quite uncertain about their future. Two trajectory IV people in Bremen, who certainly would have been unemployed under Liverpool circumstances, were kept in what could be considered warehousing schemes and received some basic vocational skills.

Whereas the difference between the two cities was quite striking, trajectory allocation and sex were less important than one would have expected. (There are, of course, gender differences in terms of quality of jobs, pay, prospects, and so on, which have been dealt with in chapter III.) Compared to those, the career behaviour displayed by our young people seems to have much more impact. Those in precarious situations were exclusively those whose strategies could be characterised by grasping opportunities or an even more passive 'wait-and-see' attitude. Young people who were taking risks, across the trajectories, were normally better off. The most successful people had used a long-term strategy. Those, however, were mostly found in trajectory I, whereas the most passive young people belonged to trajectories III and IV. Clearly, the individual strategy used in the labour market is of utmost importance but career behaviour is not just a matter of a person's free will. It depends on skills and competences that were acquired during family and school socialisation and are promoted through the structure and the resources of one's social network, as we shall see in chapter VII.

Realism, optimism or wishful thinking: a case comparison

The role of labour market institutions has been considered in earlier chapters. Personal histories show that institutions do play a vital role in shaping career behaviour and influence the way that the young see their future. A good way of comparing the institutional impact

in England and Germany is to look at one carefully matched pair of Bremen and Liverpool respondents.

Katrin had wanted to become a florist but had been discouraged by the *Arbeitsamt* and had become a trainee hairdresser. She had disliked her first job a good deal: she felt that she was not learning much (she could only wash hair, not cut it) and she got on badly with the manageress. After failing an intermediate examination she had gone to another branch of the firm, where she felt much better treated and derived more satisfaction from her work. Having finished her apprenticeship, however, she had to return to her first place of work; once again she found herself in an impossible situation with her boss, who showed her up in front of customers. She transferred to another shop but didn't like the atmosphere and was also very dissatisfied with the rate of pay. Her promised increase did not materialise and she did not get a holiday she was promised.

She gave in her notice, but managed to arrange that the firm would dismiss her so she could claim unemployment benefit. *Katrin* did not want to work any longer in the hairdressing trade. She had developed a skin problem and complained of pain in her knees from standing all day. She was hoping to receive a place for retraining for another profession, and had applied to do so with the *Arbeitsamt*. But her completed apprenticeship was a handicap to her, without it she could have got on a scheme immediately. As she had a certificate she was relying upon getting access to retraining on medical grounds. Her preferred option would have been to work in an office: 'I should like best to go into an office ... better to sit than stand the whole day'.

Nevertheless, she had applied for retraining in retail sales, despite the fact that she would have to stand all day, something which presumably had not occurred to her. In the meantime she hoped to work on a casual basis. Her real hope was still to become a florist. If the worst came to the worst she could still continue as a hairdresser, although she also cherished a hope that her father would be able to get her an office job in the firm where he worked. This was the limit of her options: 'Otherwise I don't know. It's not so easy'. *Katrin* hoped to get married by 23 or 24 and give up work:

'the job would play no role ... if I had a child I would stay at home at first anyway, definitely not work any more'.

Her matched partner in the Liverpool sample was *Judy*'s who had begun to work in a hairdressing salon on leaving school. This was part of a YTS scheme, that is, the state paid part of her salary. One day a week she was supposed to attend college with the aim of getting a City and Guilds qualification, but when another hairdresser in the salon left to have a child, she had to work on her college day as well. *Judy* had always wanted to be a hairdresser and basically enjoyed the work. She was very dissatisfied with her situation at the job, however. The clients were mostly elderly and came regularly, and offered her few opportunities for creative work. The pay (£60 per week) she described as 'rubbish', and she felt she had to work too hard, often finding little or no time for lunch. She had applied for work elsewhere but without success: 'I wrote to all these big shops in town, but same again, they are not taking anybody on. I think I wrote to every shop in town'.

Judy intended to make up for her college course by study in the evenings, for she felt that a formal qualification would give her something to fall back on if she got married and had children, that is it would facilitate her resuming work at some future time. She felt that she could not give up her job because she could not afford to live on unemployment benefit: 'It must be very hard to be on the dole. I mean I find it hard now, never mind being on the dole ... I don't know what I'd do if I was on the dole'.

Judy cherished the escapist dream of perhaps getting a job as a hairdresser for tourists in Greece. More realistically perhaps she also had the idea of working as a mobile hairdresser, travelling to customers in her own car. She would be able to get support for this from an enterprise scheme. At the moment she still lacked her driving licence, however.

Despite differing initial orientations to their occupation, *Katrin* and *Judy* judged their experiences very similarly. They both found the work physically demanding, the hours long, the pay poor and much of the work not very interesting. A number of differences between their careers can be related to institutions. *Judy* had chosen her profession herself; *Katrin*'s 'choice' had been heavily

influenced by the *Arbeitsamt*, which had played a definite 'cooling-out' role in her case, telling her she was wasting her time to think in terms of employment in a *Kindergarten* or as a florist. *Judy* could continue working even without a formal qualification. *Katrin* had initially failed the theoretical part of her examination and had to do an extra half-year as a trainee. In terms of future prospects *Katrin* could, or had to, turn again to an institution to improve her situation. The *Arbeitsamt* had to decide on the basis of a medical report whether she was entitled to a course of retraining. Only if this were impossible would *Katrin* have to turn to the labour market, either in terms of helping in an office, or resuming her job as a hairdresser. Even if she were to be retrained, she ran the risk of ending up in another job which probably would not appeal to her a great deal. In reply to the questions whether she felt she would have the job she wanted in ten years' time, and whether she could avoid unemployment, she ticked the response 'doubtful'.

Judy, however, expressed herself 'quite certain' on both these points. If we look at *Judy*'s future prospects, we can see that they are entirely bound up with her own efforts and with the chances in the labour market. She was thrown back on her own resources and was aware of this. In her position she couldn't afford, unlike *Katrin*, to give up an unsatisfactory job.

It may be suggested that optimism about the future is linked to self-confidence, and becomes a necessary element in a strategy of survival, where institutional support is weak or lacking. Clearly such a conclusion is speculative, but it does suggest a possible explanation for our survey, finding that British young people were more optimistic about their future prospects than those in Germany. English young people have to make their own way in the labour market and do so fairly rapidly on leaving school. German young people can count on greater institutional support and a longer process of transition. In such circumstances German young people can perhaps assess their expectations more realistically and sometimes with more scepticism than their British counterparts. In both countries, however, our respondents do not turn to wishful thinking.

Summary

In this chapter we attempted to illustrate the interdependence of career behaviour and external circumstances. The most successful transitions showed a combination of active and planned behaviour in the labour market, and favourable circumstances like social and material support, educational qualifications and a reasonable supply of jobs or training places in the chosen occupational field.

Grasping opportunities and working one's way up step by step is perhaps a characteristic of English young people. This type of behaviour may prove successful where labour markets are expanding or where we find an elaborated institutional network for qualification. In our Bremen and Liverpool samples, this approach mostly led to rather stagnant careers, given that the opportunity structure in these labour markets was not favourable. One young Bremen man, however, was able to use the institutionalised opportunities for a remarkable upward drift in his career.

Chances and circumstances played an important role for quite a few young people in both samples. Most of them had taken severe risks during their transition, like leaving jobs without having another one. Again, in Liverpool this type of behaviour is closely related to the labour market, with the high possibility of becoming unemployed. In Bremen, it could mean having to join a scheme instead of having a proper apprenticeship. We were surprised to find that most young people displaying this type of behaviour were making progress with their careers, perhaps because they all appeared to be active and fairly self-confident. Very complex transitions with – maybe several – moves between education and training and planned 'moratoria' could be found only in the Bremen sample, owing to the institutional prerequisites which were not available in Liverpool.

Looking at the unsuccessful transitions, we found a combination of missing individual resources and unfavourable circumstances. Institutional control and labour market problems set further limits to the few capacities for action available. In such a setting, individual strategies hardly seem to matter in comparison to the apparent trap created by external conditions. In Bremen, remedial schemes seemed

to keep paths into qualified employment open for some time and offered some opportunities to recover, but they could not offer long-term perspectives, and in some cases stigmatised those they were designed to help.

Finally, the case comparison has shown how institutional arrangements themselves can influence individual strategies and even the way that young people view their future. The Bremen hairdresser had more options but saw her future more sceptically, that is in a realistic way; her Liverpool counterpart appeared to be trapped in her situation and turned her hope to an uncertain future.

CHAPTER VI

Work, independence and occupational identity

The status-passage from school into work requires a great deal of decision-making. Our earlier work led us to expect more 'step-by-step' decision-making among the English samples as they responded to opportunity, and more strategic approaches among the German samples as they worked their way through institutionalised pathways.

This expectation, although greatly over-simplified, was broadly met. Similarly, our earlier work led us to expect, among English samples, patterns of behaviour which maximise the chances of earliest economic independence consistent with qualification goals. We test out this expectation against our samples in this chapter. How far does the search for earlier independence differentiate our English and German respondents? The question leads into wider issues of the meaning of work in the individual lives of young people in the two countries.

This not only includes the importance of work in comparison with other aspects of life, like family or leisure, but also touches upon the question of what dimensions of work are most important to the individual: material aspects, the social situation or the content of work itself? Which one of these aspects is seen as most important is again not just a matter of personal preference: it strongly reflects not only educational chances, social status and labour market options, but also the transition experiences of young people. We ask how career patterns and attitudes towards work relate to our young people's identity, that is, the way they see themselves, their 'inner' qualities, social integration and personal history.

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Occupational choice

The choice of occupation is obviously of key importance in an individual personal history. Some of our respondents in both cities had 'always' known what they wanted to be, others were still uncertain about their career goals at the time of the interview, some of them even after getting a university degree. Some of our young people in both countries and across the trajectories set their wishes upon a particular job at an early age. We have already seen that *Christiane* in Bremen was such a case:

> When I was five I got a present of a medical chest and then they said well now you'll become a doctor; no, I always said, no I will become a nurse.

Steffen also had 'always' known what he wanted to become, in his case a chef. He could no longer remember any process of decision-making relating to choice of profession:

> I don't know any more. I have no idea why that was. I just used to cook a lot together with friends and somehow it always fell to me to cook. Man, you could do that, I thought.

Cathy had always seen teaching as the career for her: 'To be honest, I cannot think of a time when I didn't want to be a teacher'.

These young people put their minds firmly on a certain occupation and were determined to follow their routes and not to be deterred by any obstacles or difficulties, as we have already seen in *Christiane*'s case.

A strong inclination for a particular job is, however, no guarantee of being able to pursue it. *Katrin* provided a good example of this. During her time at *Hauptschule* she had done a practical placement as a florist and had found the work 'really great (*ganz toll*) ... it was great with flowers, you've got to have imagination to deal with them'. The place where she had worked did not train apprentices and the Jobcentre (*Arbeitsamt*) had discouraged her from thinking along these lines, as there was apparently only one apprenticeship in this field in the whole of Bremen. She had thus

become a trainee hairdresser, which she did not like. Her love of flowers could be realised only in her private life: 'where I live is full of flowers'.

Other young people have a much harder time to find out what they want to do and try to postpone definite decisions as long as possible. *Norbert*, who had no idea of what he wanted to do after school, provides an interesting example of someone who suddenly discovered an interest and aptitude in the course of work experience on a job creation scheme, and who subsequently took up an appropriate apprenticeship. *Norbert* had previously left two apprenticeships, one as a painter where he didn't like the work he had to do, and another one as an electrician, where he felt he was being used as cheap labour without learning anything. During his subsequent unemployment he joined a remedial scheme where he was taught basic skills in metal work. While still on the course, he applied to be an apprentice toolmaker and was taken on immediately. Looking back, he was quite happy about this development: 'For three or four years now I've been working with metal, I enjoy it I should like to continue ... I'm really stuck on metal, I've fallen in love with metal'.

We showed in chapter V that not really knowing what one wants to do is characteristic of our cases in trajectory I in Liverpool: *Steve*, *John* and *Laura* had no precise idea what occupation to pursue even at the end of their studies. *Laura*, who had just finished a degree course at polytechnic and who came from a large working-class family, stated that her father had encouraged her to stay on at school and study, though for no definite profession. She had taken a business course at university 'to keep my options open'. Now she realised that there was no further option for qualification, which made her feel lost. *Laura* was very keen to find work and described herself as a person who could not stand to have too much leisure time. She was not convinced, however, whether her qualification would be very helpful in the tight Liverpool labour market. She thought she might have to make a decision between her Liverpudlian boy-friend, who refused to move, and a job outside Liverpool. *Steve* had had discouraging work experiences selling insurance and was helping out in his father's joinery before deciding what he

wanted to do next. *John* was in his final year of college, had no idea what to do afterwards and wanted to 'take it as it comes'.

While these young people saw career decisions as their personal problems, another of our respondents, *Klaus*, expressed strong resistance to the need to make up one's mind about one's occupational choice at a relatively early age:

> I think it is a large part of the dissatisfaction of the population that people are not satisfied with their work for example, because at that time [school-leaving age] they were not at all capable of making a decision about such things.

Klaus's search for an occupation was strongly influenced by the careers service at the *Arbeitsamt*, where he took an aptitude test with the result that among other things he was suited to become a hotel and restaurant specialist (*Hotel- und Restaurantfachmann*). After completing an apprenticeship and finishing *Fachoberschule*, he still was not quite sure whether he wanted to pursue this path or become something quite different and join the police.

Occupational success is not necessarily linked to having a clear idea of where one wants to go. The case of *Bernd* illustrates this very clearly. He moved from *Hauptschule* to *Fachhochschulreife* (equivalent to A-levels plus vocational training) without ever having any very clear idea in mind what he ultimately wanted to do. He knew he was interested in the electrical field, but he simply kept taking one qualification after another, when to his surprise he found that he had little difficulty in mastering the theoretical component of his courses. Of course, such a career requires a certain career behaviour (see chapter V) and the existence of an institutionalised education and training network.

Influences

These cases show that multiple influences are at work in occupational choice or placement. In considering transitions to employment we must investigate the activities and aspirations of young people themselves. As well as looking at their decision-making in

relation to the official advisory, educational and training institutions which deal with them, we must also recognise the possibility that family and friends may play a role in the careers of young people, greater in some cases than in others, but never entirely negligible. Furthermore, young people's aspirations about founding a family may also play a part in their career decisions. Also we need to ask: what are the effects of local and national cultures on the lives and aspirations of our young people? How supportive were parents and peers, how do young people experience institutionalised requirements and support. After making the transition, being in training, at work or at university, what kind of support do young people receive: financially, practically and emotionally?

Parental influence on occupational decisions

In our surveys, a high level of satisfaction with family life was indicated. Nevertheless, from our interviews we found considerable variation in the relationships of young people with their parents, siblings and other relatives. We find few examples of parents exerting, or attempting to exert, direct pressure on their children to adopt specific professions, in either country. Even if they did so, they were not necessarily successful. *Rita*'s parents had wanted her to remain in Bremen and take up a training place in a savings bank, but when she expressed opposition to the idea they readily agreed to support her in whatever choice she herself made:

> Yes my parents would have been pleased to see me in the savings bank: my sister did that and my parents said go into the bank, and I said no I should like to make my own decision and I don't have any desire in that direction, I don't want a simple office job, and then they said that's your decision you must know that. Well they're supporting me now they've said that they'll pay for my flat in F-town.

More typical, though still fairly uncommon, was for parents to express a desire that their children should stay on to study or to acquire a training place with prospects. *Laura* said:

> My dad put pressure on us to study in the first place really, because he didn't and he wants our lives to be different to his ... there was pressure to carry on with our education and not leave school at 16 definitely, definitely.

Although *Laura* did want to go to university, she had no career plans, having obtained her degree.

The other young academics, *John* and *Steve*, did not report much debate with their parents about their career. *Steve*'s parents encouraged him to go to college, but did not discuss the perspectives of different subjects with him.

Gisela was perhaps the best example for parental support that moved beyond the alternatives of exerting pressure or showing a *laissez-faire* attitude. *Gisela* grew up in a privileged situation: her father, a fairly wealthy businessman, was self-employed and had his office in the house so he was available for her and her two older brothers. Her mother was a housewife and obviously had a very close and confident relation with *Gisela*. When she went for her *Abitur*, she thought that she would be equally well suited for many different things: 'I noticed in school, I like everything, and I do almost, almost equally well with everything'. She thought about becoming an actress, a photographer, an architect, a language or art teacher but didn't find anything really convincing. She described how she had long talks with her mother where they 'disassembled' professions and tried to find out 'what exactly do those people do ... can you do that, do you want to do that?' For *Gisela*, it was most important to find work she could identify with. She was very detached from taking money as a criterion for her decision: 'I'd never have done it, choosing a profession just to earn more money'.

It was *Gisela*'s mother who brought about the idea of training as a physiotherapist. After a short time of hesitation, she decided to apply and was taken on. At the time of the interview, she was in her second year of training and more and more convinced that this was

what she wanted to do. She had no concrete plans to marry and have children, but thought that if she did she had a good chance to combine part-time work, maybe at home, with matrimony and motherhood. In supporting their daughter, *Gisela*'s parents exercised a kind of division of labour. Her mother, whom *Gisela* describes as 'more devoted to people' (*menschenbezogener*) was more important for emotional support and advice. Her father's role as the breadwinner was the financing of training and accommodation: 'He is like that, he says "that's part of it (*das gehört dazu*) ... I have to feed you through training"'. Both parents supported her in going her own way, doing what she liked to do and what gave her the highest possible amount of satisfaction:

> My parents feel very strongly, just do what you really like and what you will find fulfilling.

Torsten felt the greatest pressure from his parents. He made the grade from *Realschule* via college-based training and *Fachoberschule* to polytechnic without interruption. Nevertheless, his career was accompanied by a latent conflict about the pace of his progression. While he would rather take things more slowly, his parents tried to speed him up, starting after secondary school. He was unsure about what to do and did not find the career counselling of the *Arbeitsamt* to be of any help. So he picked college training as an 'IT (information technology) assistant' without being really convinced: 'I just did something, because my parents were pestering me'. His parents did not specifically discourage him from going into higher education but wanted to see him moving on efficiently. They saw his plans to switch to university, putting in another year, as dawdling. If *Torsten* entirely changed his subject (which he was also considering) a reason for a major conflict within the family was likely to result.

The majority of parents of the young people interviewed seemed content to let their children make their own decisions about their careers and tried to support them as best they could. The degree to which they could or did support them varied considerably, as we shall see shortly. This lack of direct involvement in career choice

may sometimes have signified indifference. At first, this is the impression given by *Sven*'s account of his parents' views who spoke to him about his career decisions 'not a bit':

> Sometimes they say I don't give a shit what you do (*ist doch mir scheißegal*) ... you've got to decide all that yourself.

It becomes clear however that *Sven*'s parents were not unconcerned about his future at all, even if their concern took the form of rows: 'No I haven't begun [to speak to them] because then there would have been rows again and I have no nerve for that'. It then emerges that in fact these (frequent) rows have been mostly about *Sven*'s career prospects or lack of them: 'Often about work that I should fall into line there better and so on, I say it's my work and not your work'.

Not surprisingly, our results show that normally parental involvement in occupational choices of our young people rises with the socio-economic and educational status of parents. On the whole, German parents seemed to be exerting more influence on their children's choices, either in a positive way, as in *Gisela*'s case, or by putting pressure on them, like *Torsten* reported. While a few young people in our sample had been definitely influenced in their careers by friends, peer influence did not generally play a large part in occupational decision-making in either country.

Becoming independent

According to Merriam (1984), identity, intimacy and independence were the three central life tasks for young adults. Psychological independence requires separation from the protective security of the family of origin, and may be achieved in various ways.

For *Gisela*, moving out was part of a normal process in becoming an adult.

> I liked the idea of moving out although I get along really well with my parents, but perhaps at a certain age it's about time.

She felt 'totally happy' when returning home to visit her parents but felt it necessary for her personal development to run her own household even if her parents paid for it. *Axel* was less emotional and described his relationship with his parents as 'really a quite useful (*brauchbar*) relationship, which is not unpleasant'.

Many young people mentioned that their relationships with their parents had changed in character during recent years. Those who had moved away from home to study, such as *Steve* and *Laura*, reported an improvement in their relationship with their parents. *Steve* said:

> My dad especially, because I mean, I reckon I've become closer to him by being away than I was before I left... I think also you tend to appreciate both your ... family home and Liverpool a lot more by being away for a bit.

Laura, who did a four-year course including one year in Spain, freed herself from too much influence by her parents and her older sister: 'moving away from home, and you know, becoming my own person without being known as the little sister and the little daughter and things like that'. She found that in relation to her parents she saw them no longer as 'being up there'.

Others reported a symbolic change in status as they got older. *Alan* said:

> Yeah, we just talk like mates, you know, not like a son and a mum like. (Int: When did you make that transition?) Just happened when I was about 16 like ... just after I left school really, I could smoke in the house.

Sometimes this change is carried through even in difficult situations which include a higher degree of dependency. *Alan* mentioned that his relationship with his mother had even improved since he had become unemployed:

> Since I've come on the dole it seems to have got better like in a way. We have a good laugh all the time. It's 'cos she's stuck with me all the time, she has to put up with me laughs or not.

This more independent relationship *vis-à-vis* parents was reflected in the fact that some young people preferred to discuss problems with their siblings, friends or boy-friends rather than their parents. *Cathy* mentioned that if she had personal problems she would discuss them with her older brother or her boy-friend. *William* said about discussing problems:

> If it's like a bad one and I've got to talk to somebody, I maybe I'll talk to my mum, but I'd talk to my girl-friend first, or maybe I'll talk to my mum and dad, but otherwise I just keep it to myself.

Again there were occasional exceptions to this pattern of increased independence. *Gabi*, who was living at home with her parents, described the situation as often strained, although her account of the reasons remained general and impersonal:

> One would like to be more independent than one is permitted ... not necessarily rules but one is fenced in ... I can imagine if one has one's own flat that one has more freedom.

While most parents were willing to let the young people decide for themselves, the extent to which parents could and did effectively support their children's careers varied considerably. Generalising broadly, that in both countries those in trajectory I probably received most material support from their parents, while those in trajectory IV received least. This is not particularly surprising, but it does indicate that the trajectories are broadly linked to the socio-economic position of parents, as well as to the likely socio-economic position of the young people themselves, and it showed ways in which the family reproduces social differences.

Most young people continued to live at home with their parents, but for those who had moved or were about to move away, family support could be very significant. As we have seen, *Rita*'s parents were prepared to pay the rent for her on an apartment in a town where rental values were very high. *Gisela*'s parents were prepared to pay the whole cost of her training away from Bremen, including the cost of a flat. Even when *Gisela* found that one flat she had seen

and liked might be too expensive, her parents insisted that she should take it.

> In the first place I didn't want to take that flat at all, 'cause I thought, no, I don't want my parents to pay that much. But then my parents went: 'you take that flat, when you're doing such a strenuous training we want you to have a good and quiet place to stay'.

For *Axel*, there was never a doubt that he was going to university and his parents expected him to do so as well, as we have seen, *Axel*'s problems of accommodation as a student living away from home were easily solved through his family links; indeed, they may have played some part in his choice of university:

> And H-town then because my mother comes from H-town and because we have relatives there which eased the search for somewhere to live ... I have a ridiculously cheap one-room flat there.

Axel's father had also been instrumental in finding him a place for his practical placement in a firm where he himself had previously worked. *Axel* was well aware of the value of these family connections and commented on them: 'relationships are often quite useful (*gar nicht so unpraktisch*)... Again the usual little game with the ties and relationships which one has somewhere'. Although *Axel* seemed close to his family and travelled home very regularly, he seemed somewhat ambivalent about his continuing financial dependence on his parents, but said that he escaped from the thought of his dependence: 'I generally come to the relatively pragmatic approach that they are prepared to do it, it doesn't bother them, and why say no then'.

Steve, from our Liverpool sample, is presently unemployed. He had completed a degree at polytechnic the previous summer, had gone on a three-month trip abroad and had then taken a job selling insurance policies. After six months he had given up this job, as he had disliked the pressure put on him to sell policies to his family and friends. He had then been unemployed for about three months. *Steve*'s problems were complicated by the fact that he had no real

idea what he wanted to do in terms of a career. In the meantime he was able to spend time working for his father in his joinery business. This involved not only helping his father with carpentry but also doing office work:

> Like the next couple of weeks he's going away and I've got to look after the whole business ... I do all his books for him and things like that. So I mean I'm looking forward to that actually.

Steve appreciated being able to work for his father and described his relationship with his parents as very good. He did not seem depressed about his unemployment and found his parents supportive.

The general picture of supportive parents was not confined to interviewees in trajectory I, although young people here could probably expect more financial assistance from their parents. This is true for all German youngsters from this trajectory. None of them was – or would have been if they went to university – entitled to the federal grant (BAföG) for students, which could be as high as £270 a month, because their parents' income was too high. In England, as we have seen in chapter IV, grants are usually provided and the amount differs from area to area. Among our cases, *Laura* was entitled to such a grant which was 'well and truly spent'. Variations that exist can make a tremendous difference to the career possibilities and life chances of young people. Those who cannot rely on financial support from parents or other relatives, or who have to support them, are clearly in a very different situation from those whose parents are financing substantially their studies or employment training. Our investigation demonstrates that the family is still an important factor in the reproduction of socio-economic differences. Furthermore, an individualised transition seems to be possible only if there is some material and emotional support – at a distance – by parents.

While the support of their family of origin was quite important to the young people, for most of them, starting their own family was still some way off and did not play a particularly large role in their current life plans. Exceptions to this generalisation were largely to be found among the young women in trajectory IV. There were

remarkable differences between the trajectories in relation to the social contexts of their biography. Those who could rely less on their family for social and financial support were more likely to involve themselves in family commitments. Those who were getting more support would probably delay starting their own family until a relatively late period. The trajectories therefore mirror real social differences in the young person's range of life chances and options.

Work values

What were the young people looking for from their work? In the first survey, they had been asked to choose the three most important characteristics of a job from a list of seven and to rank them in order. A 'friendly atmosphere' at work was chosen first everywhere except Liverpool, where 'career prospects' came first. 'Job security' ranked second in all towns except Swindon, where it was fourth. 'Good pay' came third everywhere except Liverpool, where it ranked fourth (Behrens and Kupka, 1991: 165-6). When they were asked whether they thought certain features of a job important (atmosphere at work was excluded) the only one which commanded majority support was career prospects: 'the most important thing at work is to get ahead'.

In the interviews, something not asked about in the questionnaire was mentioned more frequently than any other factor: 'interesting work'. This at any rate was the English phrase. The usual German equivalent was '*Spaß machen*', literally to 'be fun'. So it seemed that what most respondents were looking for was interesting work which they then enjoyed doing. *Gisela*, who had decided to start training as a physiotherapist rather than going to university after taking the *Abitur*, describes the reason for this attitude:

> that was always a nightmare, I think, having an occupation (*Beruf*) that you don't like. That must – must be totally awful, you're always discontented, cause you just don't get around going there spending your time with work, no matter how much money.

For *Axel* as well, the main thing was to find interesting work. In order to achieve this goal he was prepared to see his free time restricted. He took it for granted that he would be working more than a 40-hour week 'if it is something interesting'. Interesting work and long hours were for *Axel* 'things which are relatively strongly coupled together'. He rejected the idea of a less interesting job which nevertheless offered security and regular hours of work:

> That looks yellow and is called the German Federal Post ... there one can be very certain of having regulated hours of work and ... all the disadvantages of a giant bureaucracy.

Rita, who was about to start an apprenticeship in an advertising agency, was keen on a job which would be interesting and varied; she felt sure that advertising would fall into this category and she had already consciously rejected other jobs which seemed to her too boring:

> In the eleventh class everyone was saying yes we're going into the bank, we're studying banking and law, and I said that's all too bourgeois (*spießig*) and boring for me.

Tracy, an office clerk from Liverpool, provided a vivid example of how it felt to be stuck in a boring and monotonous job. As a result of her family responsibilities, she was trapped in a job which she disliked. She described a typical working day as follows:

> From about nine till half eleven I do the switchboard and type the credits for the customers and the invoices, and get all the invoices ready to go on the computer and when I finish that another lady comes in and does the switchboard, I go over on to the computer and put invoices through and things. Then check them all and go back on the switchboard before I go home. There's not a great deal that I get to do really, it's just the same thing every day.

The monotony of her job kept cropping up throughout the interview:

> Well the last few years really, it doesn't seem to have been very

interesting really or doing anything more, just doing exactly the same, and I'm looking for something a bit more interesting.

Tracy did not really know what sort of work she might do as an alternative to her present boring job. She thought that being a journalist would be exciting but 'I don't think I'd be any good at it'. Basically she could only see a realistic possibility of getting a job similar to the one she had, but she hoped for more money and more variety and prospects: 'Something ... cheerful, 'cos in this place you just stay the same thing all the way through. I'd rather have something where you could get promotion and things'.

Many, indeed most young people stressed the importance of interesting work, but of course this could mean many different things. For *Axel* it meant using his scientific knowledge. *Klaus*, however, also defined '*Spaß*' in a negative sense as a lack of fear or alienation about the coming day's work:

> Like, when I finish in the evening I come home and say that was a grand day and not oh God, oh God, oh God, in nine hours I'll be at it again.

Steve, who had been working as a financial consultant after his degree, used the same way to circumscribe '*Spaß*': 'To find the work interesting. I'd like to be able to get up of a morning and go ... Oh, yeah, I've got work today'.

For some youngsters it was also important that they could accept the products or the general aim of the firm or institution. For *Axel*, it was important to be able to identify with the products produced by his work. The firm where he had done his practical placement was very much involved in the production of armaments. This created something of a problem for *Axel*, in that there was an obvious contradiction between his technical interests and the nature of the product:

> There it's the case that the more complex, really interesting processes are very expensive, so expensive indeed that it's generally only the military which can afford them and there we have the

problem that I can't go along with that unreflectively and with a good conscience.

Manfred, on the other hand, challenged the general aims of a capitalist firm: to increase turnover and make profit. He was about to finish non-firm-based training as a wholesale and export clerk and was on practical placement for two days a week. He says that this type of occupation doesn't mean anything to him anymore; 'because, well the aims behind it, you got to be able to identify with the ideology ... seeing that the turnover is okay, selling as much as possible'. For him, it is more important 'that there is a relation between what I am doing and what comes out in the end. [That] can be an intellectual relation or an emotional one'.

The statements of our respondents concerning interest in work or '*Spaß*' at work strongly indicate that in both countries young people seek self-realisation at work. They want it to be challenging and provide opportunities for their own development. Where this is not given, like in *Tracy*'s case, the 'long arm of the job' might even cast a shadow on other aspects of life.

Money and security

One might presume that being sure of earning a reasonable amount of money each month to 'get one's life' as *Tracy* has put it, is of utmost importance to most young people. Surprisingly, money and security as major aspects of work were mentioned by relatively few respondents in both cities. One reason why money did not seem an important issue to some respondents was that they saw a good salary as a concomitant of achieving certain occupational positions. *Axel* took it for granted that, as an electrical engineer, he would 'get a relatively decent income in that field'. Another reason money may not be important to some young people was because so far they had learned to live on grants or training allowances. *Laura*, who was benefiting from the English 'grants' system, stated: 'I'm used to not having money, so just having money coming in I'm just going to be happy you know'. *Laura* also saw her sister as a negative role model

in this respect: 'she's got everything you could possibly have in a house, you know. But everything is money, money, money. All of it, and you know ... I'm not interested'.

An exception to the playing down of financial rewards amongst those in trajectory I is provided by *Rita*, who was still at school but about to embark on a training in advertising: 'I naturally wanted a job where one can make a bit of money, clearly, and then I thought yes, advertising, that's it'. *Rita* had rejected the idea of further studies at the *Fachhochschule* because it would have meant a substantial delay in earning money: 'And then I thought, you'll be studying forever, you'll be in your mid-30s before you're really earning money and that was much too long for me'.

In the survey we found that support for the statement 'earning high wages is the most important thing about a job' increased directly as one moved down the trajectories, with least support in trajectory I and most in trajectory IV (Behrens and Kupka, 1991: 178). This result seems understandable if we assume that intrinsic satisfaction at work and monetary reward can mutually compensate for the lack of the other, that those in trajectory I are more likely to end up with interesting (and well-paid) jobs, while those from trajectories III and IV are likely on the whole to have less interesting jobs and hence, are more prone to lay emphasis on money as a compensation. This general picture was for the most part borne out by the responses of our interviewees.

Thus, when we came to those young people who were doing hard or monotonous work, we found statements about the importance of money. Again it is *Tracy* who had reason to complain: 'I don't mind where I live, or anything like that, just a bit more money to help me get my life'.

Another English example is *Judy*, who had always wanted to be a hairdresser. She enjoyed the basic tasks associated with hairdressing, but was working in a business which was very short staffed. She described herself as doing three people's work. The result was that she had to work hard all day, often with hardly any time for lunch. She had also had to give up attending college to get her City and Guilds certificate because of the pressure of work. The poor financial rewards seemed to be a major problem for *Judy*:

but the money's rubbish, that's the only thing about it ... but I don't mind, it's just the money at the end of the week.

I think back and I think what I should have done and that, and I think most of it's got to do with money, you know. I'd like to go to night classes, I'd like to travel abroad, see different places. I'd love to work abroad.

Judy was often pressed by her family to ask for a rise, but she described herself as 'soft' and lacking in confidence, and it seemed that the issue of her pay had become something of an emotional as well as a financial problem for her.

Only few youngsters stressed security, such as *Gabi*, *Tracy* or *Alan*, who despite his dissatisfaction with the warehouse job had obviously stayed there for reasons of security, a tactic which had been unsuccessful:

No, I just stayed there like. Once I'm in a job I just get on with it. I don't really try and get out of it. I just stick it as long as I can. I mean, the warehouse, it was bad like but I thought oh well a job's a job isn't it.

Gabi was employed in the very postal work in Bremen which *Axel* had dismissed so sarcastically, and mentioned on more than one occasion that security of employment was important for her: 'Nowadays I think it's important ... security is more important than money for me'. *Gabi* also assessed her job as interesting and varied (*abwechslungsreich*), but the description she gave of it belied this label. One might speculate that she was unwilling to admit to herself that her job was not so fulfilling as she had expected, so she felt the desire to emphasise the aspect of security which it definitely possessed, since she was given the status of a permanent civil servant, like many employees of the Federal Post and German *Telekom*.

Social relations at work

Many more young people stated in the interviews that they found the social contacts and relationships at work very important. Significant relationships were with workmates or superiors as well as the contact with clients, patients or customers. For *Christiane*, a main source of work satisfaction was the contact with patients. As 'highlights' of her activity she described situations in which her work involved such contacts:

> Once on the night shift I was holding a woman in my arms who couldn't breathe. I sat her up and then suddenly she turned yellowish and was dead. It was lovely that she died in my arms, quite quickly and not cramped and contorted like others.
>
> then they say, oh just look my wound has healed over a little bit, isn't it lovely, they are so pleased about it.

Christiane also enjoyed her contacts with other nurses and with the doctors: 'So far I have never been on a ward where people didn't understand each other and get on ... nurses are a jolly bunch'. She also appreciated greatly that doctors and nurses used the informal '*Du*' instead of the formal '*Sie*' in addressing each other. *Christiane* described a variety of social activities which she engaged in with her colleagues: birthday parties, eating out, Christmas celebrations with '*Julklapp*', that is the giving of presents, spontaneous invitations, barbecues. Bad relations between colleagues, competition and exclusion she knew of only by hearsay. She appeared to feel as if she were in a large family. It is also worth noting that as *Christiane* was living during the week in a hostel for nurses, her social contacts were doubtless facilitated by this pattern of residence.

Cathy described how she had appreciated the support of fellow students during her teaching practice:

> The most support you got was from the other students ... because they tend to put two people in a school together and so you have the support of each other at break time and lunch time, and then it was the network of each other that supported you.

She finds it important to be integrated in the teaching staff:

> I hate the constant feeling of rejection I think, you know, I just – not that I want to be liked all the time just I couldn't work in somewhere that I couldn't get on with people all the time.

However, *Cathy* saw the principal satisfaction of her job in terms of contact with children.

Karin found her present job as an unskilled worker in a Bremen firm much more satisfying than previous ones. Partly, this was because she was better paid than as a trainee, but it was also a matter of social relations at work. Lack of social contact had been behind her giving in her notice as a sales trainee in the glass and porcelain department of a large store: 'Because if you are just standing there the whole day you are packing your glasses, and you don't get to hear anything from anybody, nothing'. Her present job was different because it offered her pleasant and supportive social contact:

> Yes, and then also if you require help there's always somebody there who does it with you ... they are all really nice, if they're married then they always say that I'm their little daughter in the firm, really funny. They looked after me well at the beginning, showed me everything properly and explained it well and so on, really great.

For *Linda* and *Klaus* '*Spaß*' at work meant contact with people. *Linda*, presently unemployed in Liverpool, said:

> I want to work with people, I like working with people, I love being in a nice atmosphere like when I worked in McDonalds. I loved it 'cos it was different people all the time.

Klaus also stressed the varied contact with customers which he had enjoyed in the hotel trade:

> My main goal is that I enjoy it (*das es mir Spaß macht*) this work with people at different places, for example, at reception, I enjoy that very much (*das macht mir sehr viel Spaß*).

Work and leisure

Rita, moving into the advertising business in Bremen, mentioned an important dimension of work, namely the relationship between work and leisure. *Rita* had many hobbies – riding, tennis, drawing, and listening to music. She expected, however, that to get on she would have to restrict the time she spent on these hobbies, and was quite willing to do so. Like *Axel*, she expected that an interesting job would involve long hours of work. Indeed, to some extent she characterised a job as interesting by the degree to which it would require extra commitment. She expected:

> That one would not necessarily always have regular hours. One must surely often work overtime and when I look at what pleases me the best then above all it's a bit of stress and to have things a bit hectic, I always like that. Not every morning to go there at nine and come back at five, that would be nothing.

Rita found the idea of restricting her personal life and interests necessary to get on in modern society. To put emphasis on leisure was mistaken: 'In today's society one can't do that any more. Everything is oriented to performance, achievement (*Da ist alles auf Leistung ausgerichtet*)'.

Not everyone felt this way about work and leisure. *Malcolm*, who worked part time as a photographic assistant and studied for his HND (higher national diploma) in photography, stated that ultimately his leisure interests were more important than his work. For this reason he was quite keen to become self-employed, because he felt that as his own boss he would be free to arrange his hours of work and free time to suit himself.

Some young people may be able to move from seeing an activity as a hobby to seeing it as a viable profession. *Steffen* was one example. An English example was provided by *Brian*. He developed his interest in music by playing his brother's guitar; he had then attended a YTS centre specialising in music and theatre work. *Brian*, who was by this time playing with various bands, was determined to break into music as a profession and remained at

home living off his parents, while auditioning for more permanent jobs in bands. At the time of interview, he had just succeeded in getting a place in a band which toured mainland Europe regularly.

To have money and time from a job for hobbies and leisure activities was mentioned as important by some other respondents. *Norbert* was very interested in music and in the theatre; indeed he saw his work primarily as a means of financing his leisure interests, which took up a great deal of his free time:

> I had no desire to continue to go to school, I wanted an apprenticeship so that I could get through the three years quickly, because I wanted to earn money for my hobby.
>
> Work, music, sleep, that's really all ... I find that quite in order, I am very satisfied.

His devotion to music – he played the drums in three bands – had caused *Norbert* to give up an apprenticeship when the firm he was working for had moved from Bremen to another city. It also provided him with a possible alternative career.

An English counterpart, *William*, was very interested in sport: he played snooker, football, badminton and squash, ran, swam and did weight-training. He, too, considered his job as an electrician as a prerequisite to fulfil his private dream: buying a motor home and going on a big tour with his girl-friend and the baby they were about to have. Maybe he was a bit too enthusiastic about his opportunities as an electrician: 'Because everyone, where ever, is looking for electricians like me, in every city in every country'.

Both *William* and *Norbert* manifested considerable self-confidence in their interviews, and one could argue that their leisure interests may have been a contributory factor in their self-confidence. Life meant more to them than just work, and their interests provided them with an alternative field for self-development and status.

Most young people are looking for several things from their work. We have shed some light on the reasons why they give priority to one factor over others by looking at their career patterns and actual job situation. There is evidence that region and trajectory

have an influence too. Job security was a high priority to several Liverpool respondents. Respondents in trajectory I were more ambitious, and expected to put more into, and get more from, their jobs than those in other trajectories. This tendency was particularly marked in Germany.

Local area influences

Young people's transitions from school to work, and the achievement of an occupational and personal identity, may be a short or a long-drawn-out process. Whatever its length, it can be conceived as a process of making choices, of taking or failing to take opportunities, in the context of a set of environmental conditions: local labour markets, national educational and welfare institutions, family and social networks, as well as past educational achievements or failures. We have already looked at social networks and trajectories. Now we focus in rather more detail on the local and national factors which can influence young people's career progressions and life chances.

The influence of place emerged in two main ways in our interviews; first, as an identification with a particular area, whether this was seen in a positive or negative light; second, the influence of local labour markets. Some of our respondents viewed their local area, with its associated social life, as an important element in their lives. *Karin* lived in an area of Bremen noted for its social problems. This was a tough area and *Karin* had had to stand up for herself at school (where she was the only girl in a class of boys) and in the neighbourhood. She had done this so successfully, however, that she had got the reputation of being a good and ready fighter (*Schlägerweib*) and was generally left free from annoyance. She clearly felt that her clique was an important source of social interaction for her. Although she was keen to move out of her parents' home and get a flat of her own outside the area, she nevertheless wanted to maintain links with her friends there.

Mentioning her home address was a disadvantage for *Karin* in finding an apprenticeship. She spent quite some time in a remedial

joinery scheme, although she wasn't interested in working with wood, because some of her friends were on that scheme, too. She was then motivated by a friend to join her as an apprentice hairdresser but gave up the idea of completing an apprenticeship altogether when the salon closed and she would have had to start over again elsewhere. Only by earning more money in her present, unskilled job might she have been able to find a flat in a better part of town.

Linda lived in a tough area of Liverpool which she described graphically and at length. She remained in the area because she was unemployed and living with her boy-friend in her mother's house. She was desperate to escape, however, and her local environment did seem to play a very negative role in her current assessment of her life situation:

> It's a very bad area for drugs. There's a lot of smack 'eads around. If you like they're on the dole but they're going into town and shoplifting and robbing cars and things. It's really hard to find like decent friends that aren't on drugs and what have you ... there's a few kids in the street next to me and they're only 12 and they're on smack, you know, and they're only babies and it's their mothers and fathers that are on it, and getting the kids on it. It's just they want to kill themselves, still they shouldn't drag the kids into it. Really it's terrible ... I just want to get away from the area where I live ... as far away ... as possible.

In our first investigation, we concluded that because of the more rapid transition from school to work in England, the effect of local labour markets was more pronounced there than in Germany, where the transition was more extended and young people were insulated to some extent from the influence of the labour market by a large network of institutions (Evans and Heinz, 1991): our interviews with young people tended to confirm this earlier conclusion. The German young people did not refer to the impact of the local labour market very often, quite in contrast to England, particularly in Liverpool. In addition to *Linda*, five more young people (*Anthony, Alan, Lynne, Laura* and *Steve*) were unemployed at the time of

interview and most of our other respondents had had experience of unemployment at some time in their careers. Of those who were currently unemployed, *Laura* and *Steve* had just finished their degree courses, but the others had been unemployed for some time, including *Anthony* for five years. His two brothers, one younger, one older, were also unemployed, and he stated that this situation was quite typical for the area where he was living.

The impact of the Liverpool labour market also affected some of our respondents in an indirect way. Normally one thinks of young people being supported by their parents emotionally and financially. In Liverpool, however, there were a couple of cases where the reverse was found: young people were supporting their unemployed parents. *Tracy*, for instance, felt trapped in a boring job, one reason being her family commitments. Both her parents were unemployed, and although her eldest brother was working he expected to be made redundant in the next couple of weeks. She gave her parents about one-third of her income:

> I know for a fact that if I left home, or one of my brothers left home, they wouldn't manage on the benefits ... I know they couldn't cope if one of us left. They keep saying you know, if you want to leave then go, but I know they couldn't.

Tracy in fact had made an attempt to go to London, but it had ended unsuccessfully:

> I was going to move to London once, er me and my mate was going to see if we could get a better job and that, but er my mum got really upset about it and so we just ended up staying.

She also found it difficult at times coping with her family's emotional reactions to unemployment, her father in particular often getting depressed about his situation.

One would not expect that locality would have a major impact on individuals in trajectory I, who are supposed to be oriented towards national rather than local labour markets. The case of *Laura* illustrates that this is not necessarily so: her interview is interesting for several ways in which place can affect an individual's biog-

raphy. *Laura* had just finished a degree in business studies and Spanish and had been looking round for a job, so far without success. She had been looking only in the local labour market, however, because she was engaged to a Liverpool taxi-driver, who had never lived outside the city and was reluctant to leave it. *Laura* was aware that given the nature of her qualifications, her career opportunities would be better if she left her home town, but she was in something of a dilemma because of her fiancé's attachment to the city. Her experiences outside the city, at polytechnic in Sheffield and elsewhere, had given her sharp reminders that she was a Liverpudlian:

> I never thought the North and South divide existed in England but it certainly does, and I only noticed that when I went away and met people from down South.
>
> People have got a bad attitude about Liverpool .. and once they know that you're from Liverpool, you know they do treat you differently, ... I thought I'm going to go to elocution lessons now because people, because of my accent, they think I'm thick they do ... I mean even a woman from Southport 'phoned me once when I was in the Chamber and it was an English school over there that takes Spanish students and she said – Oh, I thought I recognised a common accent, are you from Liverpool? I mean that's a terrible thing to say to somebody.

Tracy also commented on negative reactions to the Liverpool accent in the context of moving elsewhere, even to Manchester (although this probably has more to do with football rivalries than anything else).

> I don't think I'd go down very well in Manchester with a Liverpool accent ... No, I wouldn't stand much of a chance ... I can't open me mouth [in Manchester] otherwise there might be a bit of trouble. It's not very nice.

In his book *Does accent matter?*, John Honey (1989) argues that the Liverpool accent is among the least socially accepted of British regional accents. One might argue that *Laura*'s problems of master-

ing her occupational transition were being compounded by having to achieve a social transition at the same time. Being of working-class origins she had studied successfully and would probably be socially mobile, but she felt tied to her native city by her fiancé and by her accent.

To conclude on the impact of place or locality, it seems to be the case that its impact is greater in England than in Germany because of accelerated as against extended transition in the labour market. It is true that in our first survey we found a greater readiness to move away from their home area among English young people, but this can also be explained by their accelerated transition. It also seems to be the case that the impact of place is related to trajectory. Trajectory is not just a matter of access to local and national labour markets, it also reflects the influence of social class factors.

Transition experiences and identity

Turning to the relationship between career development and identity, it is not particularly surprising that there is a clear relationship between apparently successful career transitions and a positive self-concept, while those with stagnant or damaged careers tended to have lower self-esteem. It is less easy to say which one is the cause and which one is the effect. It may be that lack of self-confidence stems from a long period of disappointment at school or from difficult family circumstances, as well as from lack of success in occupational transitions. Clearly, however, the more detours and dead ends that one experiences in the transition, the less likely it is to improve one's self-confidence, and this makes the prospects of recovery more doubtful.

Looking at the successful transitions, we find that *Gisela*, a physiotherapist in training, is an example for 'positive' identity development in the Eriksonian sense. She combined a very supportive family situation, a successful school career, an occupational choice without external pressures, a highly challenging training situation, excellent labour market prospects and a rich and satisfactory social life. She appeared to have made the right choices for her

life and to have hit the right time to become independent. The relation with her parents meant that she did not consider their generous financial support as a threat to her independence.

Looking at the less successful young people, we find *Conni*'s biography as an example for a link between a damaged career and low self-esteem. She seems to live in a hostile world. Her language contained quite a few military metaphors. As we have seen, her aunt was a 'battle-axe' and she and *Conni* were on a 'war-footing'. She described how in her first apprenticeship she had got on badly with the leading saleswoman who had reprimanded her in front of customers. *Conni* did not seem to have a great deal of confidence in her own capacities and she was obviously to some extent suspicious of others: 'And when I know I can trust people, then I talk with them ... and if I know I can't trust them, then naturally I say nothing'.

She did, however, make a couple of statements which indicated self-confidence, though one of them was somewhat ambiguous: 'One day I will show them that I can do something... It may take a bit longer with me, but a blind hen can also find a grain of corn'. When pressed by the interviewer to say whether she regarded herself therefore as a blind hen, she agreed that sometimes she did. Taking her life history into account, one must say that *Conni*'s identity grew out of the experience of being picked on for most of her life. Consequently, the most important feature of a job for her was the feeling that this wouldn't happen again. She stated very clearly that she wanted superiors and colleagues who were prepared to accept that she wasn't very fast and would need much support and explanations to do a job.

Another example for low self-esteem is *Anthony*, who left school six years before the interview and was unemployed most of the time since. He often described himself as a victim of circumstances, starting with secondary school where he did well for the first three grades until his school was merged with several others. From then on he felt he was lacking support. He had started to work as a plasterer but had to leave the firm before he was taken on as an apprentice. He left a scheme because at the very beginning they were told that only one out of twenty had a chance to be kept on.

He seemed too depressed by these experiences to start what he himself described as a right and sensible thing to do: 'I mean I'd like to go back to college; I don't know what's stopping me from going, it's just actually getting of there to go and enrol'.

Alan is also very depressed about unemployment and lack of prospects. A sense of pride and a lack of ability to disclose himself to confidants have put him into social isolation. He described his dog as his only friend. He lost contact with his mates after he became unemployed and they got jobs at apparently the same time: 'I don't like sponging off people like so I wouldn't bother going out. So they would see me only once in a blue moon and when they seen me I wouldn't be too happy'. He generally rejected the idea of talking about problems with friends and stated that this would be quite an unusual thing to do: 'we've been mates for years and none of them ever come up and say, I've got a problem with this, or this has happened. Like if they're upset or like, they don't show you'.

It is worth noting that none of the male Liverpool respondents talked much about personal problems, so one might presume that this attitude may be part of a social code, ultimately a feature of identity as a Liverpudlian. However, *Anthony*'s and *Alan*'s cases may both count as examples for the damaging effects of unemployment on individual identities.

An example of a damaged career which was subsequently 'repaired' is provided by *Manfred*, who had the experience of being 'down at the bottom' doing odd jobs, then decided to take up a qualified training and who was on the threshold of making it to university at the time of the interview. Without the detours that he took, 'I would have lost a lot, many perspectives, from the job in the hotel and then also the training now, it was important'. The way he looked at the developments he had gone through so far could be paraphrased as below:

> From my present point of view many decisions were wrong, but at my state of development at that time I couldn't have decided differently, therefore they were right then. And, they have given me experiences which have led me to my present position, to that

extent, looking back, even the wrong decisions were useful to build a biography with final success.

For gaining the ability to integrate different or conflicting experiences from the past or for being able to reconsider the way life is going, it may be important to interrupt one's career temporarily, maybe to gather some different experiences. This idea finds its expression in the Eriksonian concept of psycho-social moratoria. Unlike Erikson, we are not suggesting that the whole youth phase can be described in terms of a moratorium. For most young people it appears rather to be a 'psycho-social laboratory', as Heinz (1985) has put it. Nevertheless, we find that our German interviews offer us examples for such moratoria at different levels of transition under favourable conditions.

In Germany, students are not necessarily obliged to finish their degree courses within a specific period and in a standardised manner. *Axel*, the bright and hard-working student of electrical engineering, felt that he was ahead of schedule with his studies and that he could afford to take things easy for a while and devote himself to more social pursuits, including his membership of the committee representing electrical engineering students:

> my studies are so far advanced that I have attended virtually all the lectures which are necessary and ... have done the majority of the diploma exams. That means then that I ... can arrange my time a bit ... that I don't have so many obligations ... I am very active in the committee for electrical engineering students (*Fachschaftsrat*).
>
> I have no desire now to continue studying with maximum intensity, I should like to have a bit of the free space which, at least according to report, one has as a student ... therefore I judge that I'll need about 12 semesters.

He also indicated that he may use this time to rearrange his social situation and maybe find himself a girl-friend.

As we have seen, in *Klaus*'s biography 'moratoria' seemed important. Both his course at *Fachoberschule* and military service that was ahead of him had this function. *Klaus* saw a widespread view that the whole period up to the age of 30 was a time when one

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could experiment with jobs and acquire qualifications and experience:

> It is the case with many people even when I talk with many people about it who are already in a profession, that the first period up to age 30 [is a period] when one jumps around a lot, when one first clips one's wings, when one acquires experience.

For *Torsten*, his community service may have had the function of a moratorium. It was during that time when he started to think about going to university instead of polytechnic and maybe take up another subject altogether.

Summary

As we have seen, people make occupational decisions at very different points in their biography, varying from definite decisions in early childhood to no decision at the end of university in our sample. For those with a lifelong occupational goal, the connection with identity seems strongest. They want to be a teacher, a nurse or a cook and they are willing to pursue their goal against difficulties and obstacles.

For those who make occupational choices in the course of their adolescent development, families and institutional provisions are very important. Our Liverpool respondents relied more heavily on their personal network, whereas young Bremen people reported more contacts with institutions. Those were helpful in cases where they provided opportunities to develop skills and try out different things like some of the remedial schemes did. On the other hand, institutional influence could be problematic where young people were 'cooled out', with the possible consequence of developing a more detached relation to the world of work or, namely for young women, thinking about withdrawal from occupational life altogether. In a narrow labour market, the longer transition in Germany seems to provide some more opportunities for young people to find out what they ultimately want to do.

Some of the findings of our survey about relevant dimensions of

work were repeated, for example, the importance of social relations and a friendly atmosphere at work. Money and security were less important, but this was partly a matter of trajectories: young people from trajectory III and IV emphasised material aspects more strongly than those from trajectory I and II. More than all other dimensions, however, the aspect of finding one's work satisfying and enjoyable was explicated by our respondents. Young people in both samples stated that they wanted their work to relate to them as a person, to be challenging, to provide opportunities for development. For most of them work was a central aspect of their life. It is worth noting, though, that some young people who had difficult transitions, but maintained other important life interests like sports or music, were quite successful in their career development compared to others in equally difficult situations. They also seemed to be less vulnerable to critical events like unemployment, less likely to become depressed or isolated and stood a better chance to repair a damaged career.

Transition experiences and identity formation seemed to influence each other in a reciprocal process. Those young people with high self-esteem, social competence and encouraging experiences in school were more likely to experience a smooth, successful transition and a stable occupational identity and vice versa. Needless to say, these aspects were strongly related to social class and trajectory. Exceptions to this tendency were found where successful transitions were accompanied by social or emotional problems or in cases where young people in precarious situations experienced a supportive environment of family, friends and, perhaps, institutions which provided opportunities to repair careers or extend experiences like in the Bremen sample.

Clearly we are dealing here with different cultural codes when comparing German and British transitions to employment, but these codes also depend on institutions for their realisation. It may not be the least important feature of transition in Germany that the system allows for moratoria on a much larger scale than in England, and thus German young people have more opportunity and time to become active producers of their own identities, however, supported by a fabric of educational and training institutions.

CHAPTER VII

Finding jobs: institutional support and individual strategies

Introduction

Whichever pathway is followed, all the young people are confronted at some stage with the need to look for work. Previous chapters have shown how transition behaviours and institutional structures interact to produce particular career outcomes. Institutional support for young people seeking work is a critical area for policy. In this chapter we explore the nature of this support, pointing also to the dynamic interaction between structures and individual action. Both the opportunities and barriers to looking for work are time and place dependent: that is, not only are they situated in particular local contexts, but also these contexts themselves vary over time. With an understanding of constraints and contexts in our four labour markets, we review the ways that the young people in our samples went about looking for work, and consider the policy implications.

Careers education in England

In England most schools have had in-school careers education programmes of some description for a considerable length of time. Many programmes have become less formalised since the designation of careers education as a cross-curricular theme in the new national curriculum (although our sample had left school before the introduction of the national curriculum in 1988). Careers teachers were usually subject teachers, who were given supplementary duties in careers advice. The type of programme and support they provided varied greatly, as did the use they made of local careers service staff. In one Liverpool school, they had a planned careers programme spread over five years and the careers teacher tried to make time available to see individual pupils, but this was partly

frustrated by the attitude of pupils and parents. The attitudes were so strongly in favour of staying on in education, that the careers teacher complained that 'pupils at the school have a very last-minute attitude to careers, and there is little sense of urgency demonstrated towards their future'.

Young people were often aware of the institutional support that was available in relation to future careers, but chose not to avail themselves of it. This was in line with other findings that some young people were 'ready to acknowledge that they had not necessarily been ready to make best use of the help and advice they were offered' (Spencer, 1991). This could be either because they felt very sure about what they were going to do or, alternatively if they were unsure, they preferred to take their future a stage at a time, particularly where this involved clearing sets of academic 'hurdles'. There were students from both Swindon and Liverpool who were able to describe sometimes quite elaborate institutional support and then said they made no use of it, because they preferred to complete their course first and then consider what they were going to do. Some students, however, indicated that there was almost tacit agreement between students and staff not to take careers lessons too seriously: 'it was an easy morning ... most of the time it was taken by the headmaster ... it was never really taken as a serious lesson'. Another complaint was that careers teaching was 'very, very [gender] stereotyped', although one careers teacher who acknowledged that this had been a problem pointed out that equal opportunities issues were now increasingly recognised.

There were other cases, however, where young people believed that institutional support from educational institutions to aid job-search was woefully inadequate or totally lacking. Several former students asserted that their college had not provided any support whatsoever and a couple who had attended a sixth-form college pointed out that the 'careers library' had consisted of a few piles of brochures and books in a cupboard; the students were expected to leaf through the material on their own, if they were interested. There were also complaints that schools had done little to offer strategic careers advice. For example, one young woman had been given no guidance about A-level choice: 'I think I picked com-

pletely the wrong subjects'; in the absence of other guidance she had done the same as her friends (languages), even though she was better at maths and science. Another young woman made a similar complaint: she felt that she had made poor option choices at 14 and this greatly constrained subsequent career choice. She would have liked a stronger science background, but 'I just don't think we had adequate advice'. A recent HMI report highlighted that poor option choice advice was far from unusual: with one-third of schools offering unsatisfactory GCSE subject choice advice and one-quarter offering unsatisfactory advice about sixth form choices (HMI, 1992).

Schools careers education provision then appeared very variable from the accounts of the young people. Again, this is in line with other evidence (Spencer, 1991). The introduction since then of the national curriculum, with careers education formally acknowledged as a cross-curricular theme, has not necessarily increased its profile. Both then and now, there was sometimes a suspicion that schools did not always feel it to be in their interests to be too open about career choices. For example, some Swindon schools in the mid-1980s had tried to play down the consideration of any opportunities other than staying on at school, in a forlorn attempt to hold on to their sixth forms. (This strategy has resurfaced elsewhere under local management of schools, and Courtenay and Williams (1990) highlight that it was rare for a careers teacher to be seen as the most helpful source of support in decisions about whether to leave full-time education.) Even after the set up of the sixth-form college in the town, careers education was seen as largely unproblematic: the attitude appearing to be that most students would be aiming for HE and, if not, with such a wealth of other opportunities to choose from, young people only had 'to take their pick', and if they wanted help they could use the careers service. There were examples of the reverse problem too: that is some 11–16 schools simply accepted initial choices of prospective school-leavers and offered neither challenge nor advice.

One young woman was initially thinking of doing a secretarial course, and changed her mind only when one of her friends was interviewed for the course and was told 'you'd be better off doing A-levels, you're too good to do this, so I thought Oh! I hadn't really

thought about it before as they didn't really push further education at our school particularly'. The school in Swindon had a working-class catchment area, and sent relatively few people to the sixth-form college to do A-levels. She has subsequently completed a university degree and is now particularly glad she did not go down the secretarial route.

The same criticism about the lack of challenge to career choices could be made about careers support in colleges of further education. Several students, in both Liverpool and Swindon, bemoaned what they perceived as an almost total lack of any broad careers education and support. Presumably college teaching staff either thought it was not their responsibility, or else made the assumption that if young people had chosen a particular vocational course then that was the path they wished to follow. In practice, many young people may not be so sure about their commitment to a particular route, or even if they were they would have welcomed more support about options, progression, work experience and the like. One hairdresser pointed out there was no careers support at college: you 'just asked the tutor if you were interested about hairdressing'. She felt that this was unfortunate in that she could possibly have had advice about other possibilities to build up a career, with hair-dressing as a back-up or even as a way of part-financing further studies, for example, even A-levels. She seemed unaware that she could have approached the careers service.

One former engineering student highlighted the lack of careers advice at the end of college. He was adamant that 'there was no careers' at college and pointed out that in any case support was needed at a much earlier stage: 'I had no practical experience so you're up shit creek without a paddle anyway'. That is, as the two-year engineering course at college had such a strong emphasis on theory, he felt that they should have been encouraged to build up their practical experience. As it was, those who left after a year often got apprenticeships and so on, whereas he was left high and dry after completion of the course, unable to get a job in engineering. He would have welcomed even informal advice: 'OND [ordinary national diploma] route O.K. if you want to go on to HE,

but otherwise you need practical experience. In which case, it might be better to get a job and continue part time'.

It seems even less excusable to offer no careers support to those not doing vocationally specific courses. Thus, one former A-level student, after again mentioning the lack of careers advice at college, told how she fell into a job but 'it still amazes me now because I didn't have a clue what I wanted to do when I left college'. Another student was on a pre-vocational orientation programme, yet she received no careers support: 'I got no direction at all' for the whole year. This was told in a matter of fact, not a prejudicial way, because otherwise she spoke highly of her time on the course. She then spent considerable time unemployed. She seemed totally unaware of the existence of the local authority careers service and looked for work on her own: it took almost a year before she was successful.

Overall then, careers education programmes of schools and colleges for under-18s were frequently criticised by young people, for allowing options and choices to be made without real help for the young people in investigating the full consequences of the decisions made. One of the few remotely positive comments was itself double edged: 'I think the information's there – it's just whether you open your mind to it really'.

Careers education in Germany

The careers education programmes were not highly considered by the young people in our English samples, but most were aware that a programme of some description had been attempted at some stage in their last few years of compulsory schooling. In contrast, the schools in Paderborn and Bremen seldom appeared to have offered an identifiable careers programme to the young people in our samples, other than inviting careers staff into school before young people start making formal applications for apprenticeships, and on some occasions giving out careers information in 'world of work' lessons. Even this often consisted of drawing pupils' attention to the facilities and support available at low threshold careers information centres or the *Arbeitsamt*, rather than offering much support *in situ*.

It should be remembered, however, that German secondary schools are much more focused upon subject teaching, with both a more restricted set of other activities and clubs and much less developed systems of guidance and counselling of any type than would be typical in English schools (Hamilton, 1987).

It could be argued that the broad pathways from the different types of schools are fairly stable and widely known, and that the range of options to be considered are much fewer than in England. The number of adults with a detailed understanding of the transition pathways through the education and training system, largely still recognisable to those who went through it in the 1950s, means that it is much easier for young people to gain an appreciation of broad pathways without resort to specialist advice. In addition, despite perhaps having to wait a year or two before gaining entry, most of those wanting an apprenticeship did eventually get one. All this, coupled with information and advice being available from the *Arbeitsamt*, could give the impression that a rough correspondence is achieved between what young people want and what is available. However, just as in the two English towns, we uncovered an undercurrent among a number of young people about the way they had made apparently clear choices only to discover the full implications of that choice at a later stage. Indeed, the manager of a Bremen umbrella organisation *Verbund gegen Jugendberufsnot* (coalition on youngsters' needs for training and jobs) pointed out that: 'from 2,000 to 2,100 apprentices in the crafts who started in 1989, about 1,000 did not finish their training'. With such wastage, and only about 50% of the dropouts going on to start another apprenticeship, there then appears to be prima facie evidence of the need for a more comprehensive approach to careers education while the young people are still at school. There was overdue recognition of some of the inadequacies of careers support, and one careers officer from Bremen highlighted how increasingly he was working in schools and workplaces, rather than the *Arbeitsamt*. Most of this work was concerned with giving information. This meant that there was little time available for the 'genuine task' of providing individualised guidance support. One of the management team of the Bremen *Arbeitsamt* deplored the fact that the lack of interest of

many teachers meant that even the delivery of a minimalist information-giving programme was often compromised.

Discussion of careers education support in both countries

Careers education programmes can be judged in two ways: either according to the quantity (and quality) of the information made available, or to the extent learners are enabled to take responsibility for their own career-planning and job-seeking. The young people in our samples overwhelmingly reported upon information-oriented programmes and the teachers seemed similarly concerned with the provision of information. Indeed, one Liverpool careers teacher judged the schools careers programme as highly successful by the first criterion. They now ran special events, for example, challenging gender stereotyping, and invited the careers service in to give talks on specific topics. These were well attended, even though the careers teacher acknowledged the most likely reason for this was that 'it got them out of something else', but had decided that 'the reason was less important than the fact that they got the information'. The careers programme provided lots of 'positive and useful' information; the careers teachers tried 'to make as much time available as possible for pupils to come and discuss careers'. The fact that many pupils demonstrated a last-minute attitude to careers was seen as a failing of the pupils (and their parents). The idea that this should be used as a criterion, let alone the touchstone, by which to measure the ineffectiveness of the careers programme was not even considered. The whole school careers programme made no attempt to alter pupil behaviour. Information was provided, time was made available, and those who were already playing an active part in the construction of their own occupational identities made use of these facilities and received support. Little help was offered to activate those who adopted a more passive approach to the formation of their occupational identities. This is not to say that people are not allowed to delay making choices until after significant events, but that the decision to delay should be the result of a

positive decision, ideally in the light of the consequences of delay, rather than the result of 'drift' or in a last-minute rush.

Our evidence suggests that young people in both countries would benefit from more coherent and comprehensive careers education provision well before their final year in school. There are real dangers, however, that while the limitations of information-oriented careers education programmes are acknowledged by many guidance specialists, inadequately resourced and supported learner-centred guidance programmes will almost inevitably decay back towards information-giving. Learner-centred guidance needs to be supported in practice, and without such support the value of careers education to many young people is likely to remain limited.

The careers service in England

This section is not intended as a review of the work of the careers service as a whole, rather it is just looking at the pattern of support offered by the careers service to those young people from the English samples. There is no strict equivalent to the careers service in Germany, in that the *Arbeitsamt* combines the function of the Jobcentre with some of those of the careers service. The careers service in England not only offered careers advice to those who had left school, but also were involved in support of careers education programmes in schools. In this context, careers officers in Liverpool pointed with pride at recent changes in some schools with recent learner-centred initiatives, such as achievement records initiative, whereby pupils assess their own performance, achievements, attitudes and capabilities, then together with tutors and careers service negotiate targets for pupils. This was seen in very positive terms as 'control is being handed back to the pupils in terms of their education and potential for their future training and employment'. Similarly, compacts whereby 'employers, training providers and pupils work together setting goals of achievement through school work and training, hopefully leading to full-time employment' were seen as valuable, particularly in helping to encourage those who worked hard but still achieved only modest formal education attain-

ments. That is, it was seen as offering hope to those who did not reject school by not measuring them against what they believed were unattainable academic goals.

These moves were seen as encouraging, but it was acknowledged that they were partly a reaction to previous practice (experienced by the young people in our sample), whereby emphasis was given to information-giving: making clear what range of opportunities were available. Thus, there is increasingly an explicit attempt to make guidance more of a two-way process. There may be limits to this in practice, especially for those with low educational attainment, when the range of options for each individual are explored. This is because those options are severely constrained by the opportunities available, the ineffectiveness of many training schemes and by the low aspirations and consequent under-achievement of many of the young people dealt with by the careers service.

This last point is significant, in that generally those making most use of the careers service in Liverpool were those seeking to leave full-time education and get either employment or training. Given that virtually all the employment and training with prospects opportunities in Liverpool were taken by those with high levels of educational attainment or at least demonstrated commitment to education, the careers service was severely limited in what they could do for this group. The experience of families, peers and older age groups meant that many of their young clients already had low aspirations. The careers service hardly needed to perform any 'cooling out' functions to dampen expectations. Indeed, the only time that a careers officer mentioned opportunities in a positive sense was in relation to Liverpool being 'a good place for young people because there are potential opportunities for continued, further and higher education'. This is a message which has already got through to most young people, but for some of those with low educational attainment, staying in education is literally the last thing they want to do.

The careers officers tended to see a sharp bifurcation between the young people they saw. There were those (the majority) who were 'positive about school and future employment', in practice, these were accepting that educational attainment was critical in

gaining access to substantive employment and training opportunities. Those who were negative about school then presented particular headaches for careers officers. Educational routes were dismissed, and these young people were similarly hostile to the youth training they might be offered as 'slave labour' and 'worth nothing' (the employers 'offering training for people for genuine job vacancies' invariably recruited from those committed to school). This group judged the careers service in terms of outcomes: the extent to which they could help them get jobs.

The irony is that the attempted shift to a more learner-centred model of guidance is in practice undermined by the fact that substantive employment and training opportunities are limited by type and occupational area. By contrast, such a model could operate successfully in Swindon in the 'boom' years. However, there too there was under-institutionalisation of employment and training opportunities. These were market-led and when the labour market collapsed, so did most of employment and training opportunities, leaving educational routes as the only substantive paths still open. Careers guidance then is stripped of much of what it had to offer in purely functional terms. It could be argued that in such circumstances more individualised learner-centred guidance becomes more necessary, but then practical considerations (most notably in terms of the size of the case loads) overwhelm the capacity of the system to deliver such support (Bimrose and Brown, 1991).

The *Arbeitsamt* in Germany

In contrast, in Germany a much wider range of education and training opportunities remain, even during times of recession, but the guidance support is relatively under-developed. As a matter of public policy, careers guidance and placement is the exclusive responsibility of the *Bundesanstalt für Arbeit*, which is a federal agency with branches in all cities. This is intended to ensure that the advice is impartial, and neither educational institutions nor private agencies are permitted to give individual careers guidance (Busshoff

and Heller, 1988). The intention is that individual interests will be given primacy, but for many young people the *Arbeitsamt* is perceived mainly in terms of helping people in some way to continue in or return to the labour market. The system as a whole still largely revolves around an information-giving role. Even where individual interviews are conducted, the emphasis appears to be on the outcome: helping the young person, and his or her parents, come to a decision about the career direction to be followed. There seemed to be little consideration of the significance of the process: the idea that a key outcome of the guidance process should be that young people should take responsibility for their own career decisions did not appear to be translated into counselling itself. An awareness of the dangers of 'subconsciously pushing' clients in certain directions, and the need to mediate between clients and their parents being more typical of their conception of key tenets of impartial advice. Another problem with the counselling support available was that the system could be easily overloaded by young people and their parents approaching the service, for example, seeking advice on career changes. It has been recognised that such reactive support rarely reaches those who need it most, for example, those without a training contract (Münch, 1986). Outreach or active contact counselling has been suggested in the past (North Rhine-Westphalia, 1979). Alternatively, such support could be attached to schemes where such young people were grouped and there was evidence of more client-centred approaches being used on schemes such as the Paderborn *Arbeiten und Lernen* scheme. This was unusual, however, and the desire of careers staff 'to help young people to find [training in] an occupation of their own interest' was experienced by some young people in both Bremen and Paderborn as implicit pressure. Indeed, one commentator in Bremen was adamant that the reason for such high levels of dropouts from apprenticeships was because many young people discovered that they had been talked into doing something they did not want to do. The most positive comments about the *Arbeitsamt* tended to come from two groups. First, those who already had a fairly clear initial idea of what they wanted to do, and information and support from the *Arbeitsamt* could support them in their choice. Second, those who wished to

consider alternatives to what they were doing now. In either case, there was a clear drive, either positive or negative. Much more problematic were those who came to the end of their full-time education without any clear idea of what they wanted to do. In such circumstances, an impossible load is often being put on one or two sessions with *Arbeitsamt* staff. The lack of coherence in careers education comes home to roost in that the young people are having to make important career decisions in what is often a highly compressed timescale. Certainly, research from elsewhere has shown that progress in a single interview is much more likely if young people are already 'vocationally aware' (Cherry, 1974; Bedford, 1982). In addition, information-oriented intervention was likely to be of little use to those with highly unstable goals (Robbins and Patton, 1985).

Discussion about institutional support for those looking for work

In England, employment and training pathways for young people are seriously under-developed: in times of recession or when particular local labour markets are depressed, the picture can be so bleak that the pathways barely exist. In such circumstances, institutional support for those looking for work can appear particularly ineffective. Swindon careers service, with its variety of provision, including jobs on offer, was not criticised in any real way. In contrast, the Liverpool careers service came in for some fierce criticism from those who wanted 'proper jobs' and saw themselves as offered only 'undesirable schemes'.

In Germany, the reverse holds: there is greater coherence and coverage of education and training provision, but the guidance support which would enable young people to navigate an individualised path through the system is seriously under-developed. Indeed, many young people are almost using their first apprenticeship as a 'trial', in that they get their first real guidance support only after they have found out what they do not want to become. This is despite the expansion of educational and training counselling hav-

ing been part of the broad consensus about what *should* happen in vocational training policy for some time (Münch, 1986). Similar calls for an enhanced role for careers education and guidance have been made in England (Ball, 1992). In both countries then, arguments for strengthening institutional support hold sway, but without any concomitant commitment of resources.

Looking for work: overview of job-seeking strategies

The young people had been asked in the questionnaire about their past activities when looking for work and what they were likely to do if they sought work in the future. There is evidence that a range of methods had been used in the past, with young people likely to use multiple job-seeking strategies in future. They were also likely to make use of both the formal system and informal networks in some way.

In both English towns, scanning newspapers for jobs was the activity most likely to have been used both in the past and in the future. Also, locality-based surveys of employers in six areas, including Swindon, had shown that the local press was the most widely used recruitment channel: indeed in Swindon 85% of employers used this method (Elias and White, 1991). Similarly, in Bremen, using newspapers was the only popular option for seeking a job in future. Several young people were scathing in their criticism of how little help they received from the *Arbeitsamt*. This reluctance to use an agency in the future, which was perceived as unhelpful in the past, was mirrored in the way only a minority of young people were likely to make use of the careers service in Liverpool. This was undoubtedly linked to the limited range of options available in depressed labour markets, and the way young people saw themselves steered towards, what were in their view, undesirable schemes. Ranson and Ribbins (1988: 206) have argued that this was inevitable given that: 'the rules of the game are being drawn up in a way to cause the careers service, in spite of the best intentions of its officers, to function as an agency of social differentiation and control!' The

converse was also true, however: where an agency was perceived as helpful in the past, as with Swindon careers service, it was likely to be used in future. In England, the prospective use of the careers service may also reflect lack of knowledge about its scope. For example, although careers officers in Liverpool stressed that they were an all-age service, some young people may have thought that they dealt exclusively with those under 18.

The contexts of job-seeking strategies are very different depending upon individuals' current status. It is therefore necessary to differentiate between job-seeking strategies in the following distinct contexts:

- before entry to the labour market (while still in education);
- from training, and within that to differentiate between training with good prospects and training with poor prospects;
- from employment;
- from unemployment.

Looking for work prior to entry into the labour market

In both countries, some of the young people on academic tracks saw their immediate goals solely in terms of the next academic stage and did not seriously investigate employment opportunities at intermediate junction points. However, there were also those without higher education ambitions who nevertheless felt that they should seek the highest level educational qualifications they could get before seeking employment. Others appeared less fixed, and did review a range of education, employment and training opportunities at each stage. Some young people were forced to look outside their existing track when faced with academic 'failure'. Alternatively, lack of success in gaining a job or an apprenticeship could keep someone within the education system, even where this would not have been her or his preference.

Successful academic careers: looking for work from HE

In both countries the academic track is sufficiently well-marked and highly regarded such that higher education can be seen as a goal in itself. That is, in all four towns some of those in these tracks did not necessarily seriously consider looking for a job before entering higher education. Typically, they entered higher education straight from school, not only without having sought a job, but also without any clear occupational intentions. Not all, however, were naive about job-seeking as some had previously worked (in England) or completed an apprenticeship (in Germany). At this stage of their careers, seeking employment after graduation had immediacy only for the English sample.

We have seen that those in the German sample who enrolled with HE institutions were still studying. Their extended transitions meant that none of them would be graduating in the near future (four students from Paderborn are now in their sixth semester and another two started their course recently after they completed apprenticeships). At this stage in their academic careers they had not yet formulated clear ideas about the job-seeking strategies they might use in future. Their thoughts about future employment included only general ideas about what they thought suitable jobs for them should look like. However, those who had also completed apprenticeships felt that such experience might help them in future job-seeking in two ways. First, by providing evidence that they had some experience of the world of work, and second, in adding realism to their picture of work and their possible contribution.

Graduates from higher education may have a problem in convincing prospective employers that they are able to perform as effectively in a work environment as they have done in an academic setting. Two possible ways of meeting such doubts are through relevant work experience or a demonstrable level of commitment to a chosen occupation. Certainly, those able to demonstrate either or both of these could be advantaged in competitive selection processes. Thus, one graduate from Swindon had almost two years'

work experience with a single company by the time he completed his three-year degree. He was one of the few students in his year who had been offered a job prior to graduation. Similarly, a newly qualified prospective teacher from Liverpool remarked that she had been offered a job after her first interview. This was perhaps hardly surprising given the level of commitment to teaching that she had already demonstrated: she had been engaged continuously in community service adult literacy teaching every Tuesday evening since she was at school. Both patterns of behaviour were perhaps untypical of young students, but that is the point: they had already signalled an active commitment to the occupational identities they were aiming towards. In contrast, another graduate from Liverpool had had interviews for accountancy jobs but had got no further because of a lack of relevant experience and had now stopped applying for such jobs.

The extent to which graduates saw themselves as being part of a national or local labour market varied. In discussing job-seeking, it is easy to exaggerate the extent to which looking for work dominates other goals and interests. Several graduates from both English towns sought employment in the local labour market, either because of financial expediency or because this integrated work and non-work goals. The relationships between how job-seeking approach and the clarity of occupational goals was again affected by the differences in the duration of the transition process in the two countries.

The young students from Paderborn and Bremen invariably had not yet thought about job-seeking, and in many cases their specific occupational goals had not yet crystallised. In the main, they had little contact with work, and those that had did not see their part-time or temporary work having significance for future occupational choice.

Successful academic careers: seeking first job upon leaving school

Findings showed that those performing particularly well at school in both countries rarely considered anything other than achieving the highest level school-leaving qualification (A-levels or *Abitur*). This was largely the case even in Swindon, where there were a wide range of employment and training opportunities available to 16-year-old school-leavers, although to a limited extent, some Swindon young people on the academic track did take vocational education and training routes from 16. However, the picture changed at 18/19 with many considering courses of action other than going into higher education. There were marked labour market effects, with far more opportunities in Swindon and Paderborn, and fewer options for young people from Liverpool and Bremen.

Employment or an apprenticeship at 18 or 19 could be seen either as a viable alternative to HE entry or as a means of generating money to help finance future studies. In either case the decision need not be irrevocable. Thus, one young woman from Swindon was adamant at 18 that she wanted to work, but a year later changed her mind and entered HE. A reverse example came from Paderborn: a young woman left school and took an apprenticeship, with the firm intention that she would enter HE subsequently. However, later she felt that the money she earned as a European secretary locked her into employment and she had given up her intention to go into HE. The influence of the labour market is partly mediated through employer recruitment strategies. Thus, in both Swindon and Paderborn until recently, major employers sought to recruit mainly from those with A-levels or the *Abitur*. In practice, this seemed to have as much to do with how the employers saw themselves (recruiters of the 'best' school-leavers) as it did with the work the young people would be required to do.

The individual career histories of those going into work or an apprenticeship at 18 or 19 after a successful academic career show a clear distinction between those who were active in their occupational identity construction processes and those who were passive.

The former included those students who actively sought employment some time before the course ended. By contrast, those more passive in the construction of their occupational identities often waited till either their course ended or 'something turned up'. While for other groups, the active ones often had a distinct, and decisive, advantage over those who were passive, the advantage in this case was much less marked. This was because, most markedly in Swindon and Paderborn, employers could not get enough of such recruits: not only was there intense competition, but also changes in demography and increases in the numbers going into HE were both decreasing the size of this 'pool'. That is, even where employers had lowered their entry qualifications, they were still likely to look favourably on applications from the academically most successful. Thus, one Swindon young woman taking A-levels, highlighted how 'I just fell into that job at 18'. A friend had given her an application form for an insurance company, which the friend had brought back from a careers open evening. She filled it in, sent it off, went for aptitude tests and interviews, then she received a 'letter saying that I'd got the job, much to my surprise'. So without ever actively seeking information about jobs and after making only a single application, she found herself in a job. Similarly, a young woman from Paderborn recalled that when she was about to take her *Abitur* she just wrote for a couple of apprenticeships and waited. She was snapped up, whereas those leaving without the *Abitur* often made dozens of such applications for high-quality apprenticeships. She thought that both the additional qualifications and the extra maturity were attractive to employers: 'I think we were chosen because we were older than many applicants, not just 17 years old like some in our class at the *Berufsschule*'.

Interrupted academic careers: seeking employment after academic 'failure'

The two previously considered groups were those who had successful educational careers at school or college. They therefore made career decisions from a position of relative strength. However, there were also those who wanted to go into HE, but who had been forced to consider other options when grades either were not as good as those they hoped to achieve or were otherwise still insufficient to secure them a place in their chosen subject and/or institution.

From Swindon, one young woman, whose grades did not get her the place she hoped, sought a 'stop-gap' job while she reapplied to HE. She found it hard to find a job that, she felt, used her A-levels, and eventually successsfully applied for a low-level clerical job advertised in the Jobcentre. Another young woman 'failed' to get the two A-levels that she required to enter HE and needed to consider a major career reorientation. She took a stop-gap job while she pondered her future. In fact, the job was working as an assistant in a pharmacy and the consequent contact that she had with health-care professionals was critical in her decision to become a nurse. Such responses were reactive and opportunistic, with the need to look for work coming as a major interruption to the planned progression.

In Paderborn, a pharmacy dispensing technician applied for a course in a vocational school when it became clear midway through her final year at school that her grades were not going to be high enough to get her a place studying pharmacy at university:

> The vocational school was not necessarily what I wanted to do in the first place. I wanted to study pharmacy and I am still waiting for a place at university, this is why I started with the training.

Interestingly enough, she thought that her work as a qualified pharmacist would not be very different from her current work in the pharmacy. Nevertheless, she still hoped to get a place at university within the next 12 months; she believed and reckoned that her time

at school would be useful for her studies and therefore was a good investment to bridge the time gap.

Within the English system, A-level failure (either outright or to get required grades) often requires rapid reorganisation of aspirations, which can result in a late summer scramble for either education or employment opportunities. Within the German system, students make different subject choices and they get indications at different times of whether they are likely to be successful in achieving HE entry in that subject. This means that they can either reorient towards a less competitive subject or else continue to apply for that subject while taking other education, training or employment opportunities.

In both countries it would appear that those who had had considerable initial academic success could survive a subsequent academic 'failure'. That is, they could either try again or else reorganise their aspirations, such that they were competing for employment and training against those with less impressive, initial academic attainment. Interrupted academic careers could then be either repaired or reoriented: the damage was unlikely to be fatal to their prospects of employment with prospects.

Job seeking strategies of those leaving full-time education with intermediate-level qualifications

In this context, intermediate-level qualifications include both academic qualifications (perhaps four O-levels or GCSEs or intermediate school-leaving certificate) and vocational qualifications (typically from CGLI, RSA or BTEC attained at FE colleges in England or certificates from full-time vocational schools in Germany). In Germany, the initial search is for an apprenticeship rather than a job. Employer preference is often for higher-level school-leaving qualifications. Hence, pressure was often on young people to obtain the highest school-leaving certificate they could, even if they wanted to go into an apprenticeship. As a result, they could be staying in

education till 17, 18 or 19 before getting an apprenticeship. That is, even those not intending to do the *Abitur* were likely to try and achieve intermediate-level qualifications before seeking an apprenticeship with prospects.

For example, in Paderborn the accepted wisdom was that if you did not have an *Abitur*, then you needed to go to *Handelsschule* if you wanted a good white-collar apprenticeship. This was the route followed by one young woman from Paderborn who wanted to work in advertising in the long term. She wanted to do a clerical apprenticeship straight from school, but 'Everybody I asked said I wouldn't stand a chance of getting an apprenticeship with my qualifications. So I didn't apply and went straight to *Handelsschule* for a year'. She used that year to collect information on training in the different companies. She wrote many applications and received several offers from which she chose a clerical apprenticeship with Nixdorf because 'this was my wish right from the beginning'. Once again then, the picture emerges of someone with clear occupational goals and active in their own identity formation processes securing their subsequent position while still in education. There were, however, examples in both Bremen and Paderborn of prospective school-leavers seeking quality apprenticeships at 16 and then staying in education, if they were unsuccessful. That is, rather than taking an apprenticeship with poorer prospects, they sought to increase their qualifications in the hope of subsequent entry. This strategy was much more likely to be successful in Paderborn with its greater available range of high-quality apprenticeships, whereas in Bremen the other option of downgrading expectations about the type of apprenticeship was perhaps an equally likely outcome.

In England, the labour market contexts of Swindon and Liverpool were vastly different and this had a marked effect on the job-seeking strategies of those leaving full-time education with intermediate-level qualifications. In Swindon, not one of our sample who left education with intermediate-level academic or vocational qualifications had been unemployed for longer than three months, as the critical stages of job-finding had been completed prior to the recession. They were not always able to get work in the occupational field they wanted, but invariably they could get a job quickly.

Jobs were available at 16, and two young women who were both determined to leave school and get clerical work used similar strategies, not only responding to newspaper advertisements but also writing speculative applications to local companies. Both were successful and went straight into employment. A young man, with good O-level grades, applied for about ten apprenticeships and then chose one of the three offered on the basis of the training opportunities. All the apprenticeships were offering 'real wages': he certainly would not have entertained working for YTS rates. Those leaving school in Swindon with moderate academic attainment rapidly found work and the picture was similarly sanguine for those coming out of college with intermediate-level vocational qualifications. The whole scenario in Swindon, prior to the recession, fitted an individualist conception of 'occupational choice'. Those with clear occupational goals set about achieving them and, although they might receive some set-backs could generally still work towards their goal. Thus, one young man failed his O-levels, but as he wanted a responsible clerical job he stayed on an extra year at school to retake O-levels and eventually gained overall four passes. After short spells unemployed and in another job, he became a tax officer with the Inland Revenue. That is, moderate academic attainment was sufficient, in Swindon, to launch someone on a career with genuine prospects.

The contrast with Liverpool could hardly have been more stark. There, the structuring of the much more limited occupational opportunities had a much more explicit influence upon job-seeking strategies. That is, the young people themselves, careers staff and training providers all stressed how competitive it was to get into many occupations or jobs. Clear occupational goals and a commitment to trying to achieve them were likely to be a necessary prerequisite, but they still would not guarantee success in Liverpool. Those with intermediate-level qualifications had usually had to make many applications to get a job, even where there had been competitive entry for initial training.

Interviews with young people in all the four towns did, however, once again highlight that there was a major division between those who were active and passive in the construction of their occupa-

tional identities. An illustration of how those active in their occupational identity formation enjoyed massive advantages over those who were more passive can be seen by comparing two young men who completed full-time intermediate-level engineering qualifications at college in Swindon. The first waited until he had almost finished the course before looking for work and then found that there were not many jobs in engineering at that time, and he had no chance because of a lack of practical work experience. As a result, he took a job outside engineering as a trainee veneer preparer. The second, doing the same engineering course, actively sought work experience in the summer after his first year in order to remedy the 'problem' of lack of practical experience. The company offered him a job for the following year after completion of college. This pattern is mirroring the experiences of the graduates, with evidence of commitment and active approaches to job-seeking strongly privileging those adopting these strategies in the labour market.

Job-seeking strategies of those leaving full-time education with low-level qualifications

In both countries a number of young people stayed in full-time education, even though their initial educational attainment was low, if they were unsuccessful in their initial search for employment or training. Only in Swindon had there been much prospect of gaining employment at 16–17. In Germany, young people either continued to apply for apprenticeships from 'holding pools', or just passed time until they were eligible for low-level jobs at 18 or went on a scheme. In Liverpool, such leavers struggled to find work or training with prospects and their choice was often either YTS, with few prospects, or to stay in education. There were many examples, even where job-seeking strategies were active, where lack of qualifications if coupled with poor employment record, for whatever reason, creates a situation from which it is difficult to break out. Thus one young woman, who had been made redundant from her job as a cashier at a petrol station and subsequently found it impossible to get another job, voiced the heartfelt plea that you

should 'get a qualification' before leaving education to have any hope at all. This is in accord with the findings of others that lack of qualifications had become a severe disadvantage (White and McRae, 1989).

In all four towns, young people leaving education (from 16 onwards in England, 18 onwards in Germany) with low-level qualifications could compete for unskilled work. Only in Swindon, however, was there relatively little competition for such work, with certain factories having almost permanent vacancies at that time. Several of our sample took such work. In the other three towns, young people were relatively unlikely to get such work through standard applications processes, their lack of work experience making it much more likely that they would have to go on a scheme first.

Looking for work from firm-based training

Some firm-based training offered good prospects of being 'kept on' by the firm. In other cases the prospects of being kept on were poor. Further, there seemed to be a cultural difference between young people undergoing substantive training with large companies in the two countries. In Paderborn, with few exceptions, once young people had secured a good apprenticeship, young people often saw their immediate future as unproblematic: they thought they 'would certainly stay on' with the company. The exceptions seemed to be those who wanted to enter HE, or as in insurance where there was an accepted progression from head office to smaller independent insurance brokers. In contrast, all the apprentices with major companies in Swindon were 'looking for other possibilities', both during and upon completion of apprenticeship. That is, even those that had decided to stay with the original company had been 'keeping an eye out' for other jobs even if not being more active. This presumably relates to the speed of transition. The Swindon young people, who had been earning comparatively high salaries for a number of years, were well aware of their market value. One major engineering employer had lost 12 of its 18 apprentices to other companies. In

contrast, the young people with the major Paderborn employers saw their future as tied to their companies, who offered the best pay in the locality in any case. There was a similar picture in Bremen, skilled workers might gravitate to major employers from smaller companies, but if people were already being trained by a major employer they were likely to stay there for the foreseeable future. In all four towns, those who either were in or had completed training, with good prospects of being kept on, seemed to have made decisions about whether or not to stay with the company in the light of longer-term career goals. It was striking that they could all articulate clear reasons for their choices: they were following clear occupational paths and any decisions to leave were being made unhurriedly and from this position of strength.

Those undergoing training in firms which offered little prospect of being kept on were in a completely different situation and the responses of the young people were much more varied. One group were never reconciled to the training and were on such schemes on sufferance. Their intention was to get employment as soon as possible. They may have continued to look for work themselves while on the training scheme and there were examples from all four towns of young people finding unskilled work in areas completely unrelated to their area of training. The warehousing function of schemes being particularly transparent in such cases. A second group were helped into employment by the contacts of the training or other support staff. Certainly in Liverpool, Bremen and Paderborn, both young people and trainers drew attention to the fact that recommendations from staff could be crucial in getting trainees jobs. Occasionally these jobs had some prospect for further training or progression, but more usually they had very limited prospects. Some undertaking training in firms with poor prospects of being kept on were those who were nevertheless determined to complete their training. Paradoxically, their chances of getting employment could sometimes then be quite good because of the perseverance they showed. Certainly this was the case in Germany, where completion of an unpopular apprenticeship did have a general labour market utility, precisely because it could be used as a demonstration of the ability to see things through to the end.

Indeed, overcoming being used as cheap labour and working 'impossible' hours as a hotel apprentice, when others gave up or became depressed, was a source of pride for one young man from Bremen, who felt he had achieved much in completing his appenticeship, even though he subsequently chose not to stay in the industry. A retail trainer in Liverpool made much the same point. Trainees were well aware that they had to work for two years for a training allowance and that only a very small proportion of them would get jobs at the end of it. Hence, the vast majority left such schemes, because they had found a job, switched to another education or training route or simply got fed up with the scheme. Certainly within the Liverpool sample, there were examples of where people had stayed with schemes until the end and had been kept on, but there were even more cases where they had not. The strategy of just completing the scheme and hoping to be kept on was very high risk, because seeking employment from a scheme did not carry such negative connotations as looking for work while unemployed. Many Liverpool case histories, and the occasional one from elsewhere, showed how much more difficult it was to get work once people had been unemployed for a long spell.

Job-seeking strategies from employment

The young people in the strongest position when looking for work were those who were already in skilled employment. There were many examples in Swindon of young people 'trading up' to jobs with better pay, status and/or prospects. Even those in skilled jobs, who stayed with their original companies, had often been promoted: in some cases, two or three times. The young people usually had some understanding of the pay rates for their type of work in different companies, although scanning advertisements in the local newspaper was likely to be the commonest means of actually looking for work.

It was not the case, however, that this upward ladder could be easily climbed by all. There was a marked bifurcation in the growth of employment opportunities in Swindon, with an expansion both of

jobs with prospects and those requiring little skill. The following examples illustrate that while it was easy to go up the skilled ladder once you were on it, it was not always easy to get on it. Thus, one young man was well on his way to obtaining intermediate-level vocational qualifications with one firm, when he was given notice he would be made redundant. There was a marked shortage of such skills in Swindon at the time, and after applying for a single job advertised in the local paper, he went 'straight from one job to another'. However, another person from Swindon, who had a stable employment record in an unskilled job but no qualifications, found it impossible to break into a job with training, despite numerous applications. The point here is that although it was possible in Swindon to move between different types of employment, this move usually had to be made early in an employment career, otherwise there was a danger of being stereotyped as capable of only relatively unskilled work.

Looking for work from employment could be influenced by 'push' factors from an existing job or by 'pull' factors from the prospective employment. Thus, one young man was disillusioned with his current employer: he didn't like the management, thought his fellow workers were unconcerned about the quality of work they produced and generally thought the firm was going downhill. So he 'asked everybody to keep an eye out for me, spent my time looking in the paper and applied for about 30 jobs'. Conversely, a young woman had a secure base as a self-employed hairdresser, but still felt the 'pull' of more glamorous work involving foreign travel. She went to travel agents and got addresses for cruise liners, airlines and so on; she then made speculative applications for jobs as a beauty therapist. She had two interviews, and although unsuccessful she felt that she could possibly reapply for such posts when she had more experience. Another young man progressively built up his driving experience through six jobs, each time 'pulled' to a new level, as he pursued single-mindedly his goal of driving heavy lorries.

The same types of push and pull factors could influence young people in employment in Liverpool to seek jobs elsewhere, although the depressed labour market made it much more difficult for

them to achieve their goals. Thus, one young woman from Liverpool working as a telephonist/typist in a print stationery suppliers reported, 'I am very unhappy in my present job. I have tried for lots of other jobs, with much better money, but most of them say I'm too young or inexperienced'. Such hurdles had meant that a number of Liverpool people were not actively seeking work elsewhere, even though they were dissatisfied in some respects with their current jobs. Those young people in larger companies had an advantage in this respect, in that internal promotion routes were still open. Overall then, there were very few examples of categorical commitment to a first employer in Swindon or Liverpool. Most young people in Swindon had already changed employers at least once, and if not, had at least considered doing so. In Liverpool, young people were less likely to have already changed jobs, but were often still looking for other work. Even where they were not, this was as likely to be because of their perception of the state of the labour market as it was an indication of commitment to the employer. In both towns, the only examples of unequivocal commitment to an employer came from those who had already made considerable progress within the company.

The contrast with Germany could not be greater. Most of the German respondents were still in education and training and were committed to their current employer for the foreseeable future. In Paderborn, there were only two examples where someone had already changed jobs. First, a legal secretary had switched from one legal practice to working for a single lawyer upon completion of her apprenticeship. She had, however, switched back when she found the new job much more boring than the old. Second, a young man had found himself a job as a storeman in the warehouse of a furniture shop, after dropping out of an apprenticeship, being unemployed and going on a scheme. He then found himself another job as a printing assistant with a small local printing company. Eight of the nine apprentices intended staying with their companies for at least a few years after completing their apprenticeships. Similarly, the four already in employment were not seeking work elsewhere. A similar picture was apparent in Bremen. There, continuation in employment or even return to education and training were the

norm, and job-seeking at this stage was almost exclusively concerned with looking for unskilled work. This could be from a job such as a retail sales assistant or from poorly paid skilled work such as hairdressing.

Overall, despite the longer formal transitions, it appears that many young people hoping to enter or continue in skilled employment with prospects in Germany do not regard themselves as being sufficiently experienced to consider changing jobs until several years after completing their apprenticeships. Although an alternative explanation would be that they recognise that employers are not necessarily so keen on the young if they lack vocational experience (Heseler and Roth, 1988). For whatever reason, the result was that at this stage job-seeking was much more likely from those seeking unskilled work.

Job-seeking strategies from unemployment

Unsurprisingly, unemployed people faced the greatest difficulties in looking for work (White and McRae, 1989). In Swindon, there was the possibility of recovery and repair of a damaged career, particularly if you were active in your job-seeking and were only unemployed for a short spell. Thus, one young man recalls how he spent three months intensively trying to get a job; 'applying everywhere ... particularly going through the papers, but also writing to a few places [speculatively]'. Eventually he got a job in response to an advertisement in the local paper. In fact he had two offers at the same time. His applications were based on an assessment of his own strengths:

> office/clerk jobs, business [because] I always liked working with figures ... so went for something mathematical or analytical. Logical ... I've always enjoyed maths and computers... What I'm doing is probably the ideal job as, linking figures with computers.

In contrast, a young woman who was much less active in her job-seeking struggled to get employment. She came out of education without a clear idea of what she wanted to do. She did not show

particular urgency, instead maintaining a steady flow of writing five or six letters a week, enclosing self-addressed envelopes, but 'you'd never hear'. She 'looked in the newspaper, kept my ears open and the radio [job slot] and that was about it. I did it all myself'. She had no experience of work, had not made use of the local careers service, and did not alter her job-seeking strategy even though it took her over a year to get a job as an office junior, working long hours with low pay, at a time when there was high demand for clerical labour in Swindon. Once in employment, she climbed the 'ladder' fairly swiftly, through two more job changes. This means it is hard to escape the conclusion that her initial rather passive job-seeking strategy was a serious mistake in that she then became labelled as 'unemployed' which seriously undermined her subsequent search for work.

So far, the examples have been of people seeking particular types of work from unemployment. Both in Liverpool and Swindon, as we have seen, there were young people for whom the idea of a 'career' would seem inappropriate. They were looking for work and would be willing 'to have a go' at a number of different things. They were likely to use personal networks. Thus, one young man was told where he might get work by a neighbour who had stopped him in the street; the job-seeking strategy was reactive, but that fitted with his basic approach of pleasing himself. When looking for work, after being unemployed for a second spell, he took temporary unskilled work as an order packer in a warehouse, refusing to go back to a previous firm when they were taking skilled labour on a temporary contract: 'money's good.... but I don't want to be treated like a piece of crap like I was before'. His job-searching was very energetic: he had applied for hundreds of jobs and was happy to take an entry-level job. He believed that was the 'way in'; even as a production operator he would then have prospects to move up. Such energy could flourish in a buoyant labour market, but significantly he was finding it much harder to 'bounce back' when the recession eventually started to bite. Prior to that, however, it was possible to sustain a 'career' in areas like construction in Swindon even if this involved many job changes. One young man had had over 30 jobs and had 8 short spells of unemployment, but had always been able

to find work fairly quickly. He had eventually settled as a roof fixer and moved to Torquay to set up 'his own business with a good friend'. His earnings in Swindon of £240 per week had given him this platform.

One of the Liverpool sample clearly craved for a similar type of existence, and wanted to work doing odds and ends in construction. However, there the reverse held with long spells of unemployment being punctuated with short spells of, for example, plastering; even this tended to be on schemes, or for friends, rather than bona fide work. The young man thought that his best hope of getting such work would be through personal contacts, whereby someone who was already established might subcontract a little work. Such an existence would likely be marginal for most people developing such skills in Liverpool. The Liverpool sample has also provided examples of young people who performed well in work or in work experience, but who appeared to suffer a sharp decline in their employability just because they had been unemployed for a lengthy spell. Indeed, unemployment seemed to send such a strong negative signal to prospective employers that even highly active job-searching was sometimes to no avail.

In the German samples, there were no examples of young people getting jobs from unemployment (this is, however, partly due to the approach to sampling where all the trajectory IV samples were drawn from those on schemes). The young people on schemes from Paderborn and Bremen have a variety of educational and training experiences and unusually, the more experience they have, the more difficult they find it to enter or re-enter the dual system. This is because the older they are, the more likely they are to have a 'damaged career', for example, having dropped out of previous apprenticeships, had longer spells unemployed and so on. Hence, young people who enrolled soon after school and managed to escape from schemes as soon as possible would have better chances of being integrated into the training market. A study (BMBW, 1991b) on young people without a formal qualification shows that only 8% of those who started as unskilled workers find their way into a firm-based or school-based apprenticeship. We have already noted (chapter IV) that some trainers expressed very negative views

about the people on schemes such as ABM G3 and were very reluctant to recruit them. This often made the young people more dependent upon the support of scheme staff to help them overcome such prejudices: they were certainly aware of the difficulties that they faced when they were identified as coming from a scheme. However, those that persevered with seeking a training place were usually rewarded eventually. This success was often conditional, in that the apprenticeships were often in areas with low completion rates and poor prospects. Others did not wish to pursue this route and were just looking for any type of unskilled work.

The picture was similar in Paderborn. Although the labour market situation had eased, it remained difficult for *Arbeiten und Lernen* participants to make a standing jump into employment with prospects. One female participant with fairly good results from school who felt that *Arbeiten und Lernen* had provided her with a number of clerical skills during her work placements applied several times for an apprenticeship, but summarised bitterly: 'I was only invited for one interview – the rest didn't even answer'. During her time at *Arbeiten und Lernen* she built up self-confidence and was sure she would be able to cope with the strain of an apprenticeship, but the lack of success meant that her newly won confidence was partly destroyed again. Through the contacts of the *Arbeiten und Lernen* social workers, she eventually got an unskilled job as a sales assistant in a local supermarket. The company regarded this as a trial period before they offered her an apprenticeship as a wholesale assistant, one of the less popular areas.

One other former *Arbeiten und Lernen* participant, who was unsure about his plans for the future, did not show any initiative at all to find himself a job or apprenticeship. He relied on the contacts *Arbeiten und Lernen* had to local employers and took on the first job that was offered to him. Even after he had finished the scheme and started his job in a supermarket, he fell back on the 'caring' support from the *Arbeiten und Lernen* social workers. Gradually he became more 'part of the department' and less dependent on support from the outside. The possible lack of support in a new working environment and the fear 'that my school-leaving marks will not be good enough' prevented him from applying for a training place.

Regarding *Arbeiten und Lernen* as an interim stage between an unfinished apprenticeship and the opportunity to find a 'good job', a young man used the available support from the *Arbeitsamt* and used what he learned about applications on the scheme. Unlike many of his former colleagues from *Arbeiten und Lernen*, he felt very strongly about what he had to offer on the labour market and therefore demanded 'an open word' with the future employer before he signed a working contract:

> Yes, one must ask right from the beginning what kind of money one gets and what one had to do. Don't ask those things as late as the first day of your employment. Ask what they will pay and how many holidays you get. They can't deny that.

Once again then a clear difference emerges between those who are actively engaged in the construction of their own occupational identities and those who remain much more passive. In Germany, as in England, a clear distinction emerges between those are still looking for a career (through an apprenticeship) and those who will be happy just to find a job, even if it is unskilled work.

Conclusions

In the two countries there are some sharply different perceptions about the value of qualifications and experience. In Germany, all, even those whose lack of qualifications means they will be excluded, accept the need to become qualified to gain access to skilled employment, or often other relatively secure or well-paid employment. This meant that many young people outside the dual system still sought entry to it at ages 19 or 20. This was coupled with the acceptance of another 'mature' view, that young people are often not fully skilled until at least a couple of years after completion of an apprenticeship. That is, they accept that they are unlikely to be able to move until they can demonstrate some experience of work. This, allied to the longer student transitions, means that apart from those resigned to unskilled work or those who feel they have developed the requisite skills and can demonstrate their experience, then there

are relatively few young people who have direct experience of looking for work at this stage of their careers. There is a marked cultural difference; with much more job-seeking in England which is related to the systemic difference of a much more open youth labour market. Certainly, most of the young people in work in the English samples saw themselves as experienced, with at least a couple of young people feeling irked that they required more experience before they could get the jobs that they sought. There was also an interesting split in the way that qualifications and experience were regarded. There was almost universal agreement that qualifications mattered in getting a job, especially the first one. Subsequently, however, many felt that experience was what counted, not only for internal promotion but also if the labour market was buoyant.

That local labour market characteristics should have a profound effect on the type of job-searching strategies employed is to be expected. There was another factor, however, which was significant in most contexts: whether they were active or passive in the construction of their own occupational identities, with those who were active far more likely to find work than those who were passive. Not only do the 'active' have advantages in that their job-searching is likely to begin earlier, be more comprehensive, imaginative and purposive, but also their earlier formulation of career goals was likely to mean that their employment, work placements or other experience were likely to have greater coherence; as a result they found it easier to convince employers of their commitment to their chosen path.

CHAPTER VIII

Transitions, careers and destinations

Introduction

We had started our first study in 1988 by conceptualising various routes from school to the labour market as trajectories. In doing this we defined the four routes referred to throughout this volume. The trajectory was a useful concept in the first instance, in helping broadly to categorise 'routes to work' in ways which were comparable. This heuristic approach had the following advantages. First, we had a context, consisting of a combination of education, training and labour market opportunities, for comparing transitions within and between the selected labour market regions in both societies. Second, we had an ideal-type of segmented routes that could be used to understand the variety of 'personal histories'.

In the present study, 'trajectory' has taken on historical significance. Respondents have been asked to reflect on their experiences, looking back on influences and events. In this way we have been able to check the trajectory-type transition pathways against individual interpretation of where the young people think they are coming from, are going to and how they make sense of their transition experiences. In this summary chapter we discuss the relationships between individual transition behaviour, career patterns and trajectories.

Methodology

We have discussed in detail the passages of young people entering the labour market by focusing on their point of view. We cannot generalise our analysis of transition biographies on the basis of relatively few cases, but we think that our careful selection of cases with reference to trajectory and labour market, and our use of problem-centred interviewing and step-by-step analysis of inter-

views, enable us to form a coherent picture of the ways that young people perceive chances and risks and how they act to realise their occupational goals.

We have found that the continuities and discontinuities of labour market entry are linked in complex ways to trajectory and transition behaviour. As our analysis demonstrates, there is a reciprocal relationship between education, training, employment opportunities (institutional provisions and labour market options) and transition biographies. The more formalised and publicly regulated transition patterns in Germany allow more individualised pathways, especially for men and for those young people who are starting from trajectories III or IV or who take advantage of a moratorium before entering the labour force. The latter applies especially for young people who come from trajectory I or II. Young women still are squeezed in a gendered transition system: in each trajectory they are channelled into 'female' occupations. Therefore, they tend to anticipate a lifelong compromise between (part-time) employment and domestic responsibilities: it seems as if they tend towards 'stagnant careers' even if they have acquired occupational qualifications.

Our analysis has generated theoretical constructions concerning the relationships between transition behaviour, as an important part of the young people's personal histories – and career outcomes. By 'transition behaviour' we mean the patterns of activity that young people adopt in attempting to realise their personal interests and occupational goals within social requirements and structural opportunities. It is rather a more or less adequate set of solutions to problems that start with educational achievement, vocational choice, looking for a training place, applying for a job and qualifying for promotion. Transition behaviour is relatively stable but it should not be equated with personal flexibility or rigidity. The specific type of transition behaviour may change in case of failing to achieve the intended result at any stage of the process.

Transition behaviours

We have found evidence for the following transition behaviours, that is, activity patterns that young people have adopted when moving along trajectories into the labour market.

- *Strategic transition behaviour:* It is planful, very often linked to a clear-cut vocational choice and to definite occupational goals. We have found this transition behaviour among young people who were in trajectory I, that is moving towards higher education.
- *Step-by-step transition behaviour:* Occupational choice is not very clear cut, there is a process of searching for an interesting occupation; the one taken up usually is not tied to a definite occupational goal. We have found this transition behaviour mainly among young people who are in trajectory II and I.
- *Taking chances transition behaviour:* This consists of occupation-related activities that are characterised by finding out about one's interests, either by confronting oneself with demanding training or educational processes, or by following a specific aptitude. We found this transition behaviour among young people from all four trajectories, but mainly young people from trajectory III were taking chances.
- *Wait and see transition behaviour:* This is characterised by an attitude of 'learned helplessness', that is one is happy if the situation doesn't get worse; there is the dim hope that there will be a lucky moment in the future. It is mainly young people from trajectory IV and some from trajectory III who look back to a transition history that is marked by disappointments and failures.

We can conclude that the extent to which young people have succeeded in developing longer-term occupational goals depends not only on their past socialisation in family and school, but also to a large degree on the way their identity formation was linked to challenges and rewarding experience in the passage to employment itself. It makes a big difference whether a young person embarks on

this risky voyage in a clearly defined progression of qualifications, based on his or her decisions, or in a diffuse, short-term arrangement which is reactive to immediate job demands. Self-confidence in youth seems to arise out of success in completion of tasks, from vocational choice to labour market entry, and in coming to terms with changing work structures in personal decision-making. The 'strategic' and the 'taking chances' approach to transition are expressions of this kind of active individualisation. There is a more passive kind of individualisation in which the young person is carried along in socially accepted transition patterns, without a sense of ultimate goal or overall direction. Lack of material and social resources act against risk-taking which could result in career 'damage'. Transition behaviour which is characterised by a 'step-by-step' or a 'wait-and-see' pattern is linked to a passive kind of individualisation.

As we have seen, individual career paths and life plans do cut across trajectories and do not necessarily comply with the expectations of parents or employers. As our first study has demonstrated, the timing of transition is dependent upon the available jobs and the cultural norms about transitions, which influence the decisions of young people. In England, parents and youth see early transition to an independent employment status as most desirable. Extended vocational training and academic education are also seen in terms of quick accession to the desired occupational status and the economic independence that goes with it. Many young people, especially from working-class backgrounds, meet training schemes that are 'in lieu of work' with reluctance or even distrust, because they fear that their expected independence will be curtailed. Furthermore, they are looking for other sources of identity stabilisation – that may be decoupled from the transition to employment – when they fail to accomplish entry to work status. This may be achieved, for instance, by setting up their own household, getting married or parenthood. This was the case in our Liverpool sample more often, mainly among young women who were stuck in a stagnant career. Our results are supported by Claire Wallace (1987), who has found that girls in Britain who have experienced unemployment and casual jobs develop lower expectations concerning career goals. In contrast, young women spend more time in education, vocational

schools and training in West Germany. While some have argued that this supports the development of strategic or 'taking chances' transition behaviour, our evidence has shown that female 'individualisation' remains restricted by traditional assumptions, and reproduces gender roles.

In Germany, we have seen that the process of becoming an adult is more protracted, with the duration of VET and higher education defining the timing of this transition. This means that the majority of the young generation serves an apprenticeship or pursues academic studies without the feeling of being socially dependent; instead they have a socially recognised role as an apprentice or as a student. The minority of young people who are channelled into schemes or casual jobs after having left school have the difficult problem of legitimising their social status, because they can't rely on an institutionalised 'pacing' of their transition. Thus, they are in a situation where transition behaviour may be reduced to 'wait and see'. By contrast, young people in England are treated as adults at 16, whether in post-16 educational institutions, training schemes or in the labour market.

The suggestion that the less institutional English framework might encourage 'reactive' transition behaviour proved to be an over-simplification. 'Step-by-step' emerged as a common transition behaviour in both countries. In England, 'step-by-step' was necessary because of the fluid nature of the opportunities available. In Germany 'step-by-step' was encouraged by the highly structured system which offered alternatives and a longer time frame for decision-making. In both countries, relatively few young people had crystallised their occupational goals. Where they had, proactive strategies were encouraged by the German arrangements, which set out clear and regulated pathways and criteria for achieving them. For those with clear occupational goals in England, the ways of achieving them were often less transparent, and 'step-by-step' was often, but not always, the response. Risk-taking was also encouraged in both countries, in different ways. Experimentation was possible within the institutionally supported transitions of Germany. In England, risk-taking tended to be confined to the buoyant labour market. In both cases, recovery would be possible, by virtue

of institutional support in Germany and operation of the local labour market in England. The risks were, therefore, calculated ones, unlikely to be fatal if things went wrong.

Transition behaviour and career patterns

We have seen that transition behaviours are influenced by labour market conditions, institutional structures and the operation of social networks. The outcomes can be characterised as '*career patterns*', produced by the interplay of trajectory and career behaviour. While there are affinities between 'privileged' trajectories and continuous careers, and between disadvantaged trajectories and discontinuous careers, our longitudinal data suggested five distinct patterns.

- *Progressive career pattern*: A continuous, institutionally predictable transition into employment, which we have found mainly among people in trajectory I and in some cases in trajectory II.
- *Upward drift career pattern*: A transition process which is characterised by moving out of the predicted trajectory outcome, usually by improving unfavourable educational or training conditions or risk-taking in buoyant labour markets; we have found this pattern among young people from all trajectories.
- *Stagnant career pattern*: Basic educational or training requirements and the first step into employment are completed, but there seems to be no occupational future direction or goal. We have found this career pattern mainly among young people from trajectories IV and III; there are, however, also some from trajectories I and II.
- *Downward or damaged career pattern*: Here young people are locked in a vicious circle that has started with failure at school, casual jobs or disliked apprenticeships that were dropped; this leads to unemployment and social marginalisation.

- *Repaired (interrupted) career pattern*: Here the predicted trajectory outcome is not achieved immediately (for example, unemployment follows higher education) but is attained subsequently; this is usually found in trajectories I and II.

Career outcomes depend not only on transition behaviours of young people but also on the institutional and labour market settings and social support available (see Figure 8.1). Changing structural conditions in the training system and the labour market (YTS and recession in Britain; smaller cohort size at labour market entry and reunification in Germany; reform of VET curricula in both countries) have had an impact on young people's transition outcomes that they could not anticipate. Thus, career behaviours have constantly to readjust to new circumstances which in turn affect outcomes.

Figure 8.1: Transitions and destinations

Figure 8.2: Transition behaviour and careers in England (E) and Germany (G) (I...IV) = trajectory

Transition behaviour	Career patterns			
	Progressive	Upward drift	Stagnant	Downward drift
Strategic	Christiane (III) - G Axel (I) - G Cathy (I) - E	Brian (III) - E	Judy (II) - E	
Step by step	Gabi (II) - G Klaus (II) - G Gisela (I) - G	Doris (III) - G Steffen (II) - G	Steve (I) - E John (I) - E Tracy (II) - E Laura (I) - E	Katrin (II) - G
Taking Chances/risks		Torsten (I) - G Rita (I) - G Bernd (III) - G Manfred (III) - G William (II) - E Malcolm (IV) - E Michael (II) - E		Conni (IV) - G Anthony (IV - E
Wait-and-see			Norbert (IV) - G Karin (IV) - G Stephani (IV) - G	Sven (IV) - G Alan (III) - E Lynne (III) - E Angela (III) - E Linda (IV) - E

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Our cases illustrate the different ways in which transition behaviours intersect with career patterns in the two countries (see Figure 8.2). Strategic transition behaviour leading to progressive career patterns is shown in the cases of *Axel, Christiane* and *Cathy. Axel* had high demands concerning his future employment as an engineer – an occupation he had always wanted to enter. *Christiane* had always identified herself with the profession of nursing, while *Cathy* 'could not think of a time' when she did not want to become a teacher. Step-by-step transition behaviour led into progressive careers in the cases of *Gisela, Gabi* and *Klaus. Gisela* had to reduce a range of occupational interests and became a physiotherapist. *Gabi's* apprenticeship with the Federal Post 'turned out better than she had expected'. *Klaus* had concluded that deciding on an occupation came far too early in life. However, strategic transition behaviours sometimes lead to stagnant outcomes, as illustrated by *Judy*, the hairdresser. *Judy* had never wanted to be anything else, but was now less than satisfied with her position. Step-by-step transition behaviours led to stagnant career outcomes in several English cases. *Steve, Laura* and *John* still did not really know what they wanted to do. *Tracy*, after five years as an office clerk, was bored with work and could not see a way forward.

Moving upwards through taking chances behaviour was found in all trajectories, though predominantly in trajectories III and IV. *Torsten* had completed FOS (*Fachoberschule*) for electrotechnics and graduated with *Abitur*, which gave him the option to enter a polytechnic college, while *Rita* did not finish *Gymnasium*: 'To study forever ... you will be in your mid-30s before you earn your own money – that's much too long for me'. *Manfred* dropped out of *Gymnasium* two years before the *Abitur*, and worked in casual jobs for ten months. After military service he finished an apprenticeship as a wholesale clerk and planned to get the *Abitur* by enrolling in FOS: 'I can make good that way... I guess you need some courage to say this or that is nothing for me'. *Bernd* exemplified the way that one can utilise Germany's educational system for a detour to the university; from a luckless applicant for an apprenticeship from *Hauptschule*, he went to a BFS/q in electrotechnics to *Fachoberschule* and eventually to *Fachhochschule* (polytechnic). *William* intended

to complete an electrician's apprenticeship and to embark on an independent life: 'Well, wait until I've got enough money to buy a house and then I'm going to finish my trade, live there a couple of years, sell the house and then we're going to buy a motor home and have money to go away with it as well'. *Bernd* and *William* demonstrate the two different training-and-work cultures in Germany and England. *Bernd* moved up the educational ladder, with increasing self-confidence in his academic abilities; *William* felt confident about making much money, home-ownership and travelling.

Conni is a case showing how taking chances could produce 'downward' career patterns; she dropped two apprenticeships as a sales person, entered BFS (*Berufsfachschule*) for social and domestic science with the goal to become a care-giver for children. She dropped BFS again after a year and she moved into a course for office work. *Conni* had many problems at home and lacked self-confidence: 'I'm still afraid to start in another firm – but, I'll prove to the other people that I can achieve something someday'.

We found that the losers of the transition to work, where 'wait-and-see' behaviour leads into downward drift, were mostly from England, and from trajectory III. This indicates that having been on a scheme tends to increase the risk of a transition to nowhere. *Lynne* started five different schemes and courses. She had been unemployed after YTS in nursing and a course in community industry for one-and-a-half years. She was determined to get more qualifications but she was worried about her situation: 'I do regret it like all the things I've done, because I wasted a lot of time. I'm 20 now, and it's four years since I left school and I still haven't got a job'. *Angela* was unemployed and mentioned the competition for jobs: 'Everyone wants a job, you know, really for the money, because the grants aren't really too good in college'. *Linda* was stuck in her transition, and said 'something will come along one day and I'll think, oh yeah, I want to do that and I'll go and I'll do it. But like until then, I haven't got a clue what to do'. *Alan*, after YTS and a casual job in a warehouse, had been unemployed for one year. He had applied for 50 to 60 jobs in 1991: 'All I wanted was to just get a job, any job – and that's all. I don't know what I want to do really, it just keeps

changing'. *Sven*, the only German example who had a chaotic transition history, started with dropping out of *Hauptschule*, followed by an unskilled job, a work creation/training scheme, unemployment, committing car thefts, another work creation scheme, then intended to enter military service. He wanted to earn some money and then get an apprenticeship.

In Germany the relationship between a cultural code which favours an extended process of learning and training before labour market entry and the resources available for education and VET still seems to be strong. Despite recession and increasing financial problems of the state, public opinion still demands that government invest more in schools, universities and training programmes. This is especially urgent in view of the fact that the ranks of trajectory I moving toward higher education are growing immensely in Germany. But the universities are under-staffed and over-crowded and the firms are deploring the steady decline of applicants for apprenticeships, especially in the crafts.

Transition behaviour and careers in national contexts

In Britain, targets have been set to increase entry to higher education dramatically, bringing it within reach of the 'average' young person for the first time, with government targets of one-third of the population of 18 year olds entering HE by the year 2000. Will the social and economic restructuring in Britain and the current educational and training reforms be able to compensate for the limited opportunities for young people who attempt to enter the labour market? In such a societal context the options for building an individually meaningful and satisfying perspective are often restricted by the early pressures to make a living. This, in our understanding, does not contribute to a strong identification with a vocational career but rather to short-term efforts to stay in the labour market. However, coming to terms with occupational discontinuity is more difficult without qualifications and vocational certificates that can be used as individual resources or 'ET-capital'. The early 1990s

have seen the numbers of young people choosing to stay in education after the age of 16 increase to 60% and above. Policies to increase the numbers achieving vocational qualifications have also been reviewed and general National Vocational Qualifications have now been endorsed as broader based routes, to complement the narrowly conceived occupational NVQs. But Britain remains a long way from the organised process of vocational socialisation which the German system offers. In the German system, institutionalised stepping stones are provided for career 'repair', even in trajectories III and IV, because these provisions aim for social integration through participation in VET. In Britain, young people tend to depend on informal social support networks when faced with unemployment and expensive housing, whereas in Germany there is more public support combined with training schemes.

The impact of local and national contexts seems clearly related to the trajectories. Most affected by the locality in both countries were young people in the lower trajectories. Those in the academic track or with a promising apprenticeship could take the chance to test the national labour market. Those without such prospects were limited to local employment opportunities. This was particularly evident in Britain, where young people were not protected from the changes of the local labour market to the same extent as their German counterparts.

In considering the national context, we come to the central focus of our two investigations. In our first study, we concluded that the English system of training was possibly more flexible than the German, which was characterised by a certain degree of rigidity (Hurrelmann and Roberts, 1991). This conclusion was derived in part from the answers given by young people to a range of attitudinal questions. English young people tended to evaluate their training experiences more positively than their German counterparts, to express more self-confidence about their capacities and their prospect for the future, to be more willing to envisage moving elsewhere for a job and so on. Detailed examination of the career histories of young people, however, tends to suggest that such a conclusion was premature, and in some respects misleading. In one or two instances young German people might have done better in Britain. *Katrin* is

perhaps a case in point. She had wanted to become a florist but had been unable to get an apprenticeship in the dual system. She had been 'cooled out' by the *Arbeitsamt* and ended up as an apprentice hairdresser, an occupation that she disliked. In Britain, it might have been easier for her simply to get a starting job in a florist's shop and to learn the trade in a practical manner without having to pass a three years' training.

Without a leaving certificate from *Hauptschule*, it is still unlikely to be able to get into a promising apprenticeship. One of the 'problems' of the German system is indeed the very restricted opportunities for unskilled work, especially for men. One reason is that many such jobs – like stacking goods in supermarkets or warehouses – are held by foreign workers. However, employers often expect employees to have finished some apprenticeship, however unskilled a job is. This is shown by the example of *Sven*, who would like to be a dustman but had no chance with his lack of a formal qualification.

Apart from these examples, one might suggest that the advantage lies with the German system when it comes to flexibility of training and employment systems. The key to this flexibility arises, in the first instance, from the extended nature of the transition from school to work. This is perhaps more congruent with the pace of psychosocial development among young people. Certainly, it permits 'moratoria' in the sense of extended training and education experiences; it enables false starts to be compensated for, lack of qualifications to be made good, and just more time to look around and experiment. It also arises from the greater significance attached to formal qualifications in the German system and the greater recognition accorded to educational institutions by employers. At first sight this does not seem like a feature of the system making for flexibility. In practice, it means that young people are under less pressure to get a place in the labour market immediately after school. They can spend more time acquiring formal vocational qualifications knowing that these will be recognised by employers or that they will open an alternative route to higher education.

Let us try to substantiate these points by looking at some more examples from young people's careers. *Gabi*, as we have seen,

applied for training as a post office official after *Realschule*. She was immediately successful in gaining a place, though her intention on leaving school had been to attend a college of commerce (*Höhere Handelsschule*) and subsequently apply for a training place. She applied for apprenticeships only in order to collect experiences of how to apply; she felt under no pressure to get a place immediately. It is interesting to compare *Gabi*'s experience with that of *Doris*. On leaving *Realschule*, *Doris* applied for training places in many offices, but again she felt under no particular pressure to get a place: there always was the option to go to the college of commerce. Having attended commercial college for two years and acquired the appropriate certificate, *Doris* applied for an apprenticeship again. She succeeded in getting a two-year commercial training place with a large firm, and had already been assured that she would be taken on permanently on completion of her apprenticeship.

In Germany, there is a wide range of educational institutions forming an integrated system for acquiring qualifications which can be used in flexible way in the commercial and industrial world. *Bernd*'s biography illustrates very well how it is possible to use this system to one's advantage. He had attended *Hauptschule*, though he could have moved on to *Realschule*; he was 'just too lazy to transfer'. In his final year at school he had applied for apprenticeships as an electrician but without success. On the advice of a teacher he had enrolled at *Berufsfachschule* instead for a two-year course and simultaneously obtained the *Realschule* leaving certificate. There he learned about the BFS/q, which is a school-based equivalent to an apprentice training. After passing this qualification he moved on to *Fachoberschule*, where he had obtained his *Fachabitur* (equivalent of A-levels). At the time of interview he was doing his military service, after which his intention was to study automation technology at Bremen's *Fachhochschule* (polytechnic) and, he hoped, end up as an engineer. In theory, such a career route exists in England via college and BTEC qualifications, but we did not come across any examples in our Liverpool interviews of anyone who had progressed so far along this route.

It would be wrong to regard the British system as inflexible, but flexibility does seem to depend on labour market conditions. Among

the Liverpool youth, only *William* seemed to have a career pattern combining formalised training with personal flexibility, which matched the complexity of some of the German examples, but his career was rather untypical for Britain. He had begun as an apprentice with a television and video firm for two-and-a-half years on leaving school. Eventually he gave up this contract. As he had a driving licence he was used by the firm to deliver their products to customers, and he felt that he was simply not learning enough about the trade, particularly about repairing equipment. After two weeks' unemployment he got a job in a factory through the Jobcentre. Because he found the job boring and unpleasant, he left after two weeks. After another spell of unemployment he went on an Employment Training course as a joiner, but had to leave because the sawdust gave him asthma. Through the agency of a friend he then obtained a job as an apprentice electrician and had just completed the first year of training. To have a formal apprenticeship, let alone two, is unusual in Britain; even in the depressed Liverpool labour market *William* was never unemployed for more than two weeks at a time.

In poor labour market conditions in Britain, young people often drop out of the system, terminating their education at the earliest stage possible. Continuing with education is seen by a significant proportion as having no point if there are no jobs. Despite the increase in voluntary 'staying-on' routes, there will remain a core of young people who view the world in this way, and will leave the educational system despite very poor prospects outside it. While the German system, with its higher degree of regulation, offers better protection for young people, vicious circles still operate for those at the bottom end, which are more difficult to break out of the longer they go on. The system certainly helps some young people out of precarious circumstances, as our cases have illustrated. If we turn to Swindon with its formerly expanding labour market, we find more examples of flexible career patterns. Some of these would be quite impossible in Germany. For instance, there was the case of a young man who had originally wanted to be either a policeman or an activities assistant at a sports centre. He went to college for two years, retook some O-levels and obtained a City and Guilds qualifi-

cation in recreation and leisure; he then went to work for an estate agent. Within a year (at age 19) he was the manager of a small branch. In four years he had six separate jobs, all in estate agency; at the age of 23 he was a senior negotiator, earning £750 per month. He had no relevant vocational qualifications. It seems likely that such a career requires not only negotiation skills but also a booming property market as well. Swindon also provided us with an example of an apprentice electrician who obtained a BTEC electrical and electronic engineering certificate and on qualification got a job as a marketing support engineer earning £10,000 per year. A young woman left school with two A-levels to work in an insurance office but became dissatisfied with her prospects, took a second chance and went off to train as a teacher. Another young woman became a pharmacy assistant after passing one A-level at college; finding the job without many prospects and having had contact with doctors and district nurses, she decided to become a nurse. While young people in Swindon did not always get the job they wanted, they could always find a job quickly and those with risk-taking or other pro-active approaches could navigate towards their goal. This flexibility is, however, highly labour market dependent and recession can cut off openings 'at a stroke' leaving the young person without an adequate qualification base to fall back on.

The two systems are flexible in different ways. It does seem unsatisfactory to regard the German system as inflexible, for if anything it seems to provide; more resources for flexible transition behaviour.

We noted in chapter I that Germany surrounds young people with strong institutional structures for transition, while Britain surrounds them with job opportunities, differentially according to economic circumstances. Flexibility in Germany comes by using 'institutional permeability', as the personal histories collected by us clearly demonstrate. Flexibility in Britain comes by 'playing the labour market' and informal support networks, the latter compensating for the former in recession and declining labour markets. It seems difficult to find an effective balance between a market-led and an education-driven model, in the design of a future transition fabric that would facilitate identity elaboration and flexible labour

market participation at the same time (cf. Streeck, 1989). According to our results, preference should be given to a period of stable and basic VET over direct integration into the labour markets. As well as giving a recognised framework of qualifications and pathways, this should give time and support for finding and changing direction, for self-investment and for searching out opportunities beyond those which immediately present themselves. How can this best be achieved?

Conclusions

Our findings suggest the need to reinforce active modes of individualisation in ways which are less labour market dependent. In Britain, the recent increases in voluntary 'staying-on' rates after the age of 16 indicate that the time may be ripe for establishing extended transitions as the new 'norm' for young people. Experience in Australia, originally modelled on the British system, showed that staying-on rates accelerated once the 50% mark had been passed and the norm became staying rather than leaving (Ainley, 1991).

Recent figures indicate that a similar process may now be taking place in Britain too (DES, 1992b). Where the introduction of extended transitions within the institutional framework of education would have been culturally unthinkable a generation ago, such a change in the 1990s would be going with the tide of events both nationally, and internationally. That is not to say that the tradition of work-based education and training should not be built on where it has the potential to operate effectively, but it can be argued that the education-led approach may be best for Britain in the context of the continuing lack of real employer commitment and the long history of cultural resistance to legislative solutions to this entrenched problem.

While the German apprenticeship provides a strong framework and a process for vocational socialisation based on political and public commitment, we have seen that this operates in a highly gendered way. This is one of the 'entrenched problems' of dual

systems, which 'cools out' young women at an earlier stage than schooling models do. The labour market performs this same function in Britain for the minority of young women who try to enter it early.

A second area of weakness in the German transitional arrangements lies in the lack of guidance and support for young people to develop an individual pathway through the framework of opportunity provided, as illustrated in chapter VII. While Germany needs to strengthen the processes and its mechanisms to counter gender disadvantage within its well-organised institutional framework, England needs, as a matter of urgency, to sort out its framework and give an organised structure within which its guidance support and equal opportunities measures can work better and more pro-actively. While young people undoubtedly have goals and aspirations, the framework for achieving these is confused, confusing and incomplete.

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CHAPTER IX

Building on cultural traditions: problems and solutions

Introduction

Moves towards European integration have always given special attention to the position of young people. The objective of the single market to be established by the end of 1992 demanded 'a vast area of freedom for workers, wage earners and the self-employed' (EC, 1990). Underpinning it as a 'tool for facilitating the practical exercise of freedom of movement of workers' (EC, 1990) is comparability of qualifications for purposes of recognition, with the implication that Vocational Education and Training (VET) in all European countries will need to be co-ordinated and moderated according to a common set of standards. As a step in this direction, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Education and Training (CEDEFOP) has been examining the vocational qualifications required in comparable skilled occupations across all EC countries. Of special interest has been the mitigation of gender-based, ethnic and regional disadvantage, in which reform of VET has been seen as having an important part to play.

The wider issues connected with mobility – including housing, drug-taking, financial assistance, advice and counselling – have been the subject of a series of reports, including those produced by select committees of the British Parliament (House of Commons, 1991; House of Lords, 1991) and by the European Commission's Task Force 'Education, Training, Youth' (Chisholm and Bergeret, 1991). At the same time, stresses and strains in such integration strategies have been apparent within the Community as, post-Maastricht, different member states have questioned how far sacrifice of their own systems for another model or models is desirable.

In this context, it is not surprising that the first report of our research attracted interest, particularly in England, much of it misinformed. The report set out to demonstrate, through the experience of young people in two English and two German towns, the

strengths and weaknesses of the English and German VET systems for preparing young people for employment. The English popular press latched on to the idea that all was not perfect in the German system and that the English system was not quite as bad as we had been led to believe. The well-orchestrated burst of chauvinistic enthusiasm for English approaches even reached the point where the minister responsible for VET in Parliament asserted that British training was something to be proud of.

Much of this commentary missed the point. The research revealed deep-seated problems with the English arrangements, which were exacerbated at times of economic crisis. Young people in England were critically dependent on employers' judgements of what made for a good employee, which typically involved the acquisition of either academic qualifications or work experience. The main problem with the German system was its difficulty in adapting to new employment demands. Its assumption of vocational preparation for all young people also presented severe difficulties for the small proportion of young people who 'fell through the net' and ended up untrained and unqualified in a hostile labour market environment.

The problems we revealed and the questions we posed about possible solutions have contributed to the wider debate which has surrounded the relative merits of the 'mixed model' versus the 'schooling model' and the 'dual model' for VET (Evans, 1990). In an edition of the CEDEFOP journal, *Vocational Training*, devoted to 'interdependence in the relationship between general education and vocational education' the Swedish educationist, Torsten Husen (1989), argued the case for the Swedish comprehensive schooling model, because it embraces continuity of experience from education into employment, with vocational education increasingly replacing academic elements of the curriculum for those young people not planning to go on to higher education. 'One should postpone organisational differentiation as far up in the system as possible and try to keep all students in a common core programme' (Husen, 1989; for a German view along the same lines, see Schweitzer, 1989). The alternative view has been stated by the German sociologist, Hans Peter Blossfeld (1990), who maintains

that the dual system is best because it guarantees regulation of both the educational part of the provision, as carried out in the *Berufsschule*, and, most importantly, entry into employment through the work-based training elements of apprenticeship.

England operates a mixed VET model with vocational education, training and direct entry into jobs at the age of 16 all serving as routes to skilled employment. It also places no compulsion on unemployed young people to stay in touch with the system after 16. It is important to acknowledge, though, that the German system also has a large schooling element in it, especially for girls. Although most boys attending *Hauptschule* and *Realschule* enter apprenticeships, a somewhat smaller proportion of girls do so. In 1990, 43% of all apprentices were girls, that is, 630,000 out of a total of close to 1,5 million. More than half of them (345,000) concentrated in ten occupations, mostly clerical, sales and caring work (c.f. BMBW, 1992: 26f). More than 20% of female apprentices in 1990 were either hairdresser, sales assistant or office clerk, all badly paid and with little prospects. A significant proportion stayed on in education, attending a variety of special vocational schools (*Berufsfachschulen*), again with a clear gender division. Girls formed the majority here, with almost two-thirds of approximately a quarter of a million attendants in former West Germany (c.f. BMBW, 1992: 43). These differences extended to higher education, where in 1991, 24% fewer girls attended than boys (BMBW, 1991c), compared with a 4% difference in England (DES, 1992a).

Perhaps the most that can be said about existing European VET systems as models for Europe is that there is no uniformity in delivery or standards. All have some disadvantages and all have something to offer. The German system is highly regulated, but still displays great variability in quality from one type of occupation to the next and from one employer to another. The largely unregulated English system offers job opportunities and mobility in buoyant labour markets and low-quality training and stagnation in depressed ones. In our previous report we set out the implications of these differences for reform of each country's system in our 'Questions for Germany' and 'Questions for England'.

What have we learned from the new study which will enable us to take our policy conclusions further? The main message is that *individuals* need targeted help in making a successful transition to adulthood and that the various agencies involved in education, training, social and financial support, advice and counselling are themselves all in need of reform. They must join in strengthening transition behaviours that lead to career patterns with prospects for young people.

English and German VET compared

The English and German VET systems differ both objectively in the forms they take and subjectively in how they are experienced. The German dual system provides a more comprehensive set of institutional arrangements for ensuring that transition to some kind of stable location in the occupational structure can be achieved. The term '*Beruf*' refers to a vocation or profession which every adult is expected to have. In our first study, we saw signs of what we thought was early marginalisation of young school-leavers failing to obtain the cherished apprenticeship. The German system was seen to be more 'unforgiving' than the English one to those who had been poor achievers at school or had subsequently dropped out of training. Young people who went on 'remedial schemes' (compulsory for school-leavers without apprenticeships) were stigmatised because these were seen as inferior to proper training.

In part, these problems were clouded by the labour market situation at the time; there was a shortage of good apprenticeships for all the young people who wanted to get them, especially in Bremen. By 1991, the situation had improved in West Germany with most applicants getting placed (BMBW, 1991c). We found that many of the young people who had been in difficulty before had now managed to get on to the qualification route. A small number continued to have problems, however, and some were clearly unlikely ever to get back in. But in general, the system offered continuing opportunities over a sufficiently long period for most young people to get at least some kind of qualification out of it.

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In contrast, our observations of the British system reinforced our earlier view that its effectiveness for all young people other than those on the academic route was strongly labour market dependent. Multiple routes into employment and the premium placed by employers on experience, rather than qualifications, ensured progress and opportunities while the local economy was sound and there were young people around within it who wanted jobs. Once the slump of the late 1980s began, doors were closed and only the best qualified academically were able to open them. Even in Swindon, where young people had raced into relatively well-paid jobs and some had held major responsibilities while still in their teens, the recession of the late 1980s presented serious problems. In Liverpool, the situation remained much the same: fierce competition for every job and training largely used as a holding pool or 'warehouse' where young people were kept occupied until, as young adults, they ultimately found a job or, more frequently, became unemployed.

In Germany there was no expectation of an immediate job with adult pay and prospects, there was instead an extended period of preparation for some job or other, often quite loosely defined. In the extreme case in both countries, students either had known what they had wanted to do from an early age, such as to become a nurse, but, or, as in the great majority of cases, had little conception when entering higher education of what they were going to do afterwards. Building up the 'educational capital' for advanced qualifications was all that mattered. Such conceptions in Germany extended down the occupational scale. Even after entry to a job following an apprenticeship, there were expectations of further junior status and more training as well as further education; there was little interest in changing jobs and exploring other opportunities until the induction period was over.

In England, among school-leavers such 'student' self-perceptions were almost entirely absent. Leaving education at 16 marked the change of status from 'school kid' to adult with all the accoutrements of money, status and independence that this implied. Failure to achieve it, which was now the lot of the great majority of school-leavers, bred a frustration with the situation and endless seeking of new opportunities to change it. This was compounded by the

absence for many of the 'guaranteed training places' promised by the government and by the ready observation of contemporaries who had made the transition directly into jobs.

In England, 18 year olds had many of the rights of adult citizens; but perhaps equally significantly, the institutions of the wider English society treated most school-leavers as near-adults. It was striking to find that banks and building societies were prepared to lend money to young people in the form of mortgages, credit cards and overdrafts. In Germany, awarding credit to people who were not seen as fully responsible citizens, without parents vouching, was rare, and if it occurred at all, always involved a large deposit. Dependency status was assumed and expected by everybody until they have finished vocational or academic training. There was in consequence, far less frustration with financial status among German young people, whose training allowances were smaller than those of their English contemporaries.

Transition behaviours and career patterns

Our research design was based on the principle of equating individuals in comparable career trajectories in England and West Germany. The four we chose – academic, skilled, semi-skilled, unskilled – offered the major contrast in transition routes within any industrialised country's employment structure, differentiating especially between the academic and vocational (qualification) routes and the unskilled (unqualified) routes. Although we knew from the outset that in Germany the whole programme is one of getting young people out of the unqualified route altogether, while in Britain it existed in large numbers, we matched people in equal numbers on each route. This was to try to attach meaning to the experiences taking place on each route in the context of expanding and declining labour markets in the two countries (Bynner and Heinz, 1991).

At this stage of the research we have seen in some way more convergence in life experience in the two countries and in some ways less. Related to, but distinct from our four trajectories, are

different types of transition behaviours and career patterns that in some ways transcend national boundaries and in other ways demarcate them even more clearly. Our classification in chapter VIII of transition behaviours as strategic, step-by-step, taking chances and wait-and-see, emphasises the critical choices which confront young people through adolescence and beyond and the ways that different individuals, and groups, cope with them. Our classification of career patterns in terms of progressive, upward drift, or repaired, stagnant and damaged, and repaired, points to the successful or unsuccessful consequences for careers of particular transition behaviours. Individual flexibility in adapting to existing labour market conditions, however, may lead to small returns for both young people and society when education and training options are structurally limited.

Critical in policy terms is the role that the state can play as a buffer against negative consequences and the means of mitigating them when they have occurred. What are the various agencies involved in transition decisions in each country? What changes in these agencies should be introduced to help young people achieve realistic occupational goals as part of a successful transition process?

We have described the optimum mode of transition as 'active individualisation', that is autonomy in the choice of occupational goals and in the choice of occupational routes to enter them. This contrasts with the passive forms of individualisation, in which goals are weakly defined and strategies to achieve them uncertain. Rather than control their own transition, the young people too often find themselves propelled on to a downward occupational spiral into unskilled work and unemployment. We have observed that in both countries these modes of individualisation and the career patterns that characterise them have structural foundations in gender, race and social class. Those on the top trajectories, typically high achievers with strong social support, tend to the active mode; those on the bottom trajectories, typically poor achievers with weak social networks, tend more to passivity. There is some evidence that the English system encourages active risk-taking rather than strategic approaches, by surrounding young people, unevenly, with job

opportunities. The German system can actively promote strategic approaches by surrounding young people with a reasonably transparent framework of institutional support, but only if the learning and support processes encourage active behaviours within this framework. Girls' mode of transition also tends more to passivity than boys and, because of the perceived conflicting demands of a domestic career, operates through a much narrower range of occupational choices.

Support services in the school and beyond can play a role in determining which of the two modes is encouraged and, more significantly, what kind of career patterns flow from them. Our research showed a range of personal social and institutional support services that young people use in making their transition choices. These interact, so for any policy to be effective, it needs to take account of not only the young people themselves but also the whole of the social and educational network in which they are embedded. A 'holistic' approach is needed (Chisholm and Bergeret, 1991).

Career choice

The critical career decisions that young people have to make usually occur in the early years of secondary school in England. They generally occur later in Germany, even though in Germany, through the type of secondary school entered at age 12, the broad framework for career choice – academic or vocational – has been set. We found that in England, careers advice at school and beyond was plentiful, especially for those on vocational routes, but most of it was of an information-centred kind with little attempt to build up the young person's own autonomy as a seeker and user of advice on which to base decisions. Girls fare particularly badly in this respect because of the assumptions typically made about their limited occupational perspectives by advisers. For this reason, young people placed little value on the advice they received through the careers lessons and even the careers service, typically relying on friends and family to help them decide what to do instead. The current review of the whole process of careers advice and counsel-

ling from careers classes in schools to the careers service needs to take these points into account. An overhaul of the system is long overdue.

In Germany, at school level the need is less for overhaul than for providing any careers advice at all. What is offered usually comes after leaving school from the *Arbeitsamt* and then typically after failure, when a young person has, for example, failed to get an apprenticeship or dropped out of one. Typically, the young person is directed to another apprenticeship or a remedial scheme. We suspect that at least some of the repaired career patterns that we encountered over the two years elapsing between the two phases of our study had in fact been aided by sound advice from the *Arbeitsamt*; but we were struck by the extremely negative attitudes that many young people held towards it.

However, the *Arbeitsamt* should be seen as a relatively small part of a much wider range of *social* support services for young people (many of them in the voluntary sector) guided by a long-standing commitment to strong and comprehensive youth policy. The existence of a government minister responsible for youth policy and the two youth research institutes set up and sponsored by the Federal Government in both East and West Germany reflect the much greater store placed in Germany on helping young people make the transition to adulthood successfully. In Britain, there is no co-ordinated attempt to meet youth needs and no intention to develop one (Chisholm and Bergeret, 1991). Young British people rely much more on their family, peer group and own resources to find their way to adult life.

What comes across in both countries is that the quality of advice and the most positive outcome from it typically depends on the young person's past achievements and employment attitudes. Those who are in most need of positive help – locked into stagnant or damaged career patterns centred on semi-skilled and unskilled jobs, for example, and young women generally – were least likely to get good advice. They were more likely to be 'cooled out' into the limited range of training opportunities and occupations thought to be appropriate to their abilities. There is a strong case for much more targeted help across the whole ability range. There is also a

need for a reappraisal of attitudes to its recipients, which should attempt to break down gender, race and class occupational stereotypes rather than reinforce them. Clearly there are many advisers who, despite the vagaries of labour market and training opportunities, remain committed to a positive view of every young client's potential, regardless of class, race and gender. Others, who we suspect are in the majority, may assist in dampening aspirations and reinforcing passivity. We should recognise, however, that the power and influence of advisers is circumscribed by the constraints within which they and their clients operate.

Family finance, social support and leaving home

Poor advice at a critical choice point is only one element of an unsatisfactory transition. Difficult family situations and lack of financial resources also provide a serious threat to many young people's prospects. In Germany, because of the assumed dependency status over a longer period and financial support systems for those young people whose families cannot support them, young people are enabled to keep their options open for much longer. Nevertheless, for some, what was on offer was insufficient to keep them in the VET system, and a downward drift into marginal employment became inevitable.

In England, the preferred response to all difficult financial and family situations was to terminate education and seek a job. Leaving home, even if only temporarily, was often part of the pattern (Ainley, 1991). In a booming local economy this could lead to a positive career pattern. In our first survey we found young people in Swindon in prosperous circumstances owning their own homes. But in weak economic conditions, difficulties became compounded as training allowances and poor employment experience disadvantaged the young person further in the labour market.

Even those pursuing higher education routes were of course not without their difficulties. In England, particularly, reliance on parental support while living away from home in a situation where full

costs of maintenance were likely to be high could produce situations of real hardship, consequently increasing the incentive to drop out. In Germany, where no fees are charged for higher education but grants are seldom awarded, parental support is crucial. The lengthy period of transition means that vicious circles may be set up, whereby studies take longer than anticipated, part-time work is taken on, less time is available for study and progress towards the degree is slowed still further.

Despite these problems, OECD (1992) figures suggest that, on the criterion of dropout from higher education, both Britain and Germany do relatively well. In 1988, 94% of English students and 83% of German students completed degrees, compared with only 55% in France and 31% in Italy. The English lead here – the highest completion rate of any recorded – suggests that the combination of relatively short degree programmes and state support for fees and maintenance does have advantages. How long these will be sustained remains to be seen.

Young people in difficult family situations reported positive benefits of living away from home, with stronger family ties often developing afterwards. We conclude that there is urgent need for a comprehensive policy in both countries towards financial support for young people. Such a policy needs to be built on the recognition that after a certain age there is a positive benefit to be gained in living away from the family – as is acknowledged in England for young people on the academic route. It implies the need not only for larger elements of targeted financial support through grants and loans over a longer period of time, but even more important, affordable housing available for young people everywhere.

VET provision

In reviewing the quality of provision in the two countries, we were struck by its variability. In Germany we had our attention drawn to the generally low status and poor facilities of many *Berufsschulen* compared to the *Gymnasium*. In England, it is common to imagine that German state institutions will be well funded and viewed

favourably. The *Berufsschulen* we heard about were seen in much more negative terms. Young people saw the *Berufsschule* as continuing the schooling they had hoped to get away from, often in worse conditions. Employers questioned whether what went on in the *Berufsschule* had much vocational value. In the education system generally, as part of the poor status attached to vocational courses, the *Berufsschule* was poorly regarded, and morale was often low among the teachers. For boys undertaking apprenticeships, this negative feature of VET was counter-balanced by the often more effective and satisfying work-based training. For girls, whose training was more heavily concentrated in schools, or typically the *Berufsfachschule*, the poor quality suggested an inferior form of VET for them. One of the major challenges for Germany is to restore the *Berufsschule* to its rightful place as a core element of VET by improving funding and the co-operation with companies. This means better training for teachers and much more investment of resources.

But this is only part of a wider issue: the need to give vocational courses and qualifications full parity of esteem with academic (general) ones. The major criticism that German trade unions have continually made of the dual system (e.g. Schweitzer, 1989) is that although its defenders claim parity, the reality is that vocational education is seen as inferior. The increasing demand for places at *Gymnasien*, which have doubled in size relative to *Hauptschule* since the Second World War, reflects parents' and young people's concern that they do genuinely get the best. The answer in dual system critics' terms, which our research supports, is to break down the distinction between general and vocational education by, for example, opening up access to higher education via the vocational education route and encouraging a much greater mixture of academic and vocational experience for all young people. The conservative response has been to call for two types of apprenticeships: the high-status academic entry kind lasting three years, and the vocational lasting two years and not offering qualified entry. The desire to differentiate dies hard!

In contrast to the German *Berufsschule*, the English further education college, for the relatively small proportion of people who

entered it, had a good reputation. The whole world of 'technical' day-release schools ('Secondary schools with ashtrays': Major, 1990) with an ethos not unlike that of the *Berufsschule*, had given way to further education colleges in which a wide range of both academic and vocational courses were on offer. The problem in England was, as ever, under-resourcing. There was also a need to build up interest in FE for the large number of young people who still found that trying their lot in the labour market was more attractive.

This is the crucial issue for England: how to integrate further education and youth training provision with what is on offer in the local labour market to ensure that both students and employers see the two elements, VET and jobs, as inseparable. Britain's Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs) have been given the responsibility for bringing this about. The difficulty is that they represent only a tiny proportion of employers in their area, most of whom need much more persuasion from government, in the form of financial support, to take trainees on. The TECs' dominant concern is to find ways of honouring the government's pledge to find a training place for every young person who wants one. In 1992, the shortage was running at 60,000 places.

The regional dimension also needs to be acknowledged. The continuing poor labour market conditions in areas such as Merseyside, where Liverpool is located, inhibit the operation of any effective local VET policy. The problem is now compounded in Germany, where the new *Länder* from the former East Germany face huge problems in offering a VET provision which is anywhere near comparable to that which was taken for granted in the former West Germany.

Within these constraints, basic vocational preparation and the *Berufsfachschule* in Germany and FE college and YTS in England all offer opportunities for young people to move their careers in positive directions. They also play their part in undermining careers and allowing young people to stagnate or damage their prospects irrevocably. The experience of poor teaching, followed by exam failure in the English system, typically leads to dropout. There is much to be said for more pro-active policies to help young people with diffi-

culties and develop better means of protecting them within the VET system along German lines.

With regard to the curriculum and qualifications, there is more certainty in Germany about the content of training and the meaning of certification that comes from it. Long-established systems of regulation and monitoring, both nationally through BIBB (*Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung*) and locally through chambers of commerce, ensure that the content and standards of training can be properly communicated and recognition given to the vocational qualifications everywhere. In England, despite the existence now of the National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) with the brief of developing nationally accredited standards for all vocational training (NVQs) there is still much further to go before these are universally accepted by employers or young people and their parents. Indeed, a survey by the Institute of Manpower Studies (published in September 1992) has concluded that significant changes in the new system of NVQs are needed if they are to provide a credible answer to Britain's further education and training needs. Lack of information was linked with low take-up of the qualifications and 'as yet, most people cannot even conceptualise what owning an NVQ means' (IMS, 1992).

It was striking in Germany how important the goal of a vocational qualification in the form of an apprenticeship was to the young people in our study. In England, for the majority of early school-leavers, a vocational qualification still remained of minor importance. Work experience through employment was still the dominant goal.

The question for Europe

Are either the German or the English transition systems ideal for Europe? Both have a lot to offer in a model that has to embrace the needs of the whole population of school-leavers. The institutional structure of the highly regulated German system, and the regard paid to qualifications for all, does appear to provide a framework that will satisfy the needs of most. Its weaknesses are perhaps the

still too rigid boundaries between academic and vocational routes (defined initially through types of secondary schools entered) and the failure to accommodate those young people who prefer work to education and training and drop out of the system.

Britain offers a wide range of transition routes, including direct entry into the labour market, and emphasises work experience rather than qualifications. In consequence, young people seek to gain jobs early and develop confidence in their abilities on the basis of their work experience. In the ideal combination, it offers choice and a developing career with good prospects, not always based on qualifications. The problem with it is that it depends for its success so heavily on the vagaries of local labour market conditions and the attitudes of employers. It is also almost completely unregulated, without any yardsticks by which the quality of training can be judged universally across the system and little recognition by employers of qualifications as a means of communicating them.

Technological change demands effective learning skills for young people to be equipped to benefit rather than suffer from it. It is difficult to have confidence that the rush to employee status, pursued by so many young British people without a period of high-quality vocational preparation, is a proper basis for the adaptability and continued retraining that is going to be needed.

The problem goes deeper when we consider the level of skills held by those within the work place. Britain suffers from a 'low-skills equilibrium' in which low investment in training, low-skills levels and wages, low expectations and, therefore, demands for training are mutually reinforcing. A low level of vocational competence is transmitted from one generation to the next (Finegold and Soskice, 1988). In contrast, upward mobility and more responsibility is possible through the *Meister* system in Germany, that demands further training and qualification for skilled key workers or small employers to update them in technical knowledge and skills and equip them with pedagogical expertise before they are considered competent to train others (Rose and Wignanek, 1990). The 'high-skills equilibrium' is the critical target for every industrial nation to aim at, but as we discuss later, Britain seems in many ways furthest from achieving it. In studies focused on economic perform-

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ance alone, Steedman and Wagner (1989) have concluded that the British workforce is 'insufficiently skilled, flexible and polyvalent' to meet the challenges of competition and that

> more disturbingly, current British policy-initiatives seem focused too much on narrow skilling; we see no evidence that these policies will bring about an increase of adequate dimension in the breadth of training that will be required by tomorrow's industry. (Steedman and Wagner, 1989: 53)

The answer could be a combination of the English and German system offering a wide range of properly regulated and upgraded routes to skilled status, ranging from full-time college through apprenticeship to mixtures of work and training extending over much longer periods of time. Age-barriers to education or training make little sense in a world where some form of VET is likely to be needed through most of adult life.

We must recognise, however, that VET systems, with all their strengths and weaknesses, originate in cultural and economic traditions which are substantially different and not easily susceptible to change. In England, since 1980, education has increasingly been driven by the demands of the labour market, to supply skills to meet employer requirements. Statements about 'problems' at the interface of education, training and the labour market are generally underpinned by assumptions that labour market structures and processes are given and that education must be reformed accordingly. Thus, in England, demand-led improvements in education and training have been pursued, without accompanying reforms of the youth labour market, as Raffe (1991) among others has argued. We have shown that greater uniformity and regulation of German routes to employment minimises local labour market effects, while in Britain the training arrangements for young adults are more closely tied to local labour market conditions and the requirements of particular employers than to anything resembling a national system. In Germany, centralised and regulated systemic factors determine the forms of vocational preparation available, mediated by local labour market conditions. In England, the converse is true

in that local labour market conditions tend to dominate. For example, in 1988 the expanding local economy of Swindon attracted many averagely qualified school-leavers into well-paid youth jobs at 16 without any guarantee of formalised training. With the subsequent downturn in the economy, prospects for such young people evaporated. This loss of human resource and potential cannot be afforded, quite apart from the social costs.

As we have noted, Germany has an economy with a high-skills equilibrium. Our studies have shown how vocational education and training underpins this, despite certain rigidities in the system. The prime lesson from German VET experience is that a training culture can overcome systemic weaknesses. That is to say, employers, politicians, unions, young people and their parents share the belief in the importance of high quality vocational preparation before full entry into occupations. Any proposed systemic changes in England should, therefore, seek also to change the training culture. But public policy should also recognise that a strategy based around education and committed employers offers more realistic ways of effecting such a change, than policies which are exclusively employer-led. In the former case, committed employers can have a catalytic effect, whereas in the latter case the inertial drag of 'reluctant' employers continually pulls the system back towards a low-skills equilibrium.

With international competitiveness increasingly being seen as linked to the quality of labour, England needs to find its own way to pursue public policies designed to bring about the establishment of a training culture. Extending the period of foundation education and training, ensuring that VET pays attention to processes as well as outcomes, and more comprehensive approaches to human resources development in companies are required. Their acceptance depends on redefining 'norms' in England. Moves can already be seen in all these directions, but what is missing is a coherent public policy to pull all the different strands together. The current requirements of many employers continue to act as drags on the system as a whole. This in turn means that while some employers are committed to training as a key 'competitive weapon' (Graham, 1989), the economy as a whole remains locked into a low-skills cycle. Equally,

our Anglo-German comparisons have shown that a training culture provides the essential conditions for high-level and renewable skills, and in such circumstances employers not only can, but also are eager to get involved in education and training. However, there is no evidence to suggest that an employer-led approach alone can move a society from a low to a high-skills economy. It seems that an education-driven strategy, rather than an employment-led one, backed by all the social partners, is necessary. Once sufficient momentum has been achieved, and increasingly large numbers of employers demonstrate an explicit commitment to education and training, the training culture takes shape. Once established, this should become self-sustaining without special 'measures' and 'incentives' of the English kind. The revitalisation of high-quality employer-based routes within the framework of an education-driven strategy can play a vital role in helping to develop this training culture. The challenge, of course, is how to bring about the crucial attitude change towards the training values for which Germany, perhaps of all the European nations, continues to provide the model.

Critical for any country's VET system is a unified qualifications framework through which young people can be guaranteed further progression into higher education or to more specialised vocational study or full adult status in the labour market. For any such system to function, it must be backed by support networks that enable young people to withstand the difficulties of study, that ensure that they are properly supported financially and that they have the right kind of advice when they need it. Provision should match individual need (Jones and Wallace, 1992; Banks et al., 1992). Machinery needs putting in place through the formal education system for developing much greater autonomy in young people in the use of information to make proper career choices and to enable them to gain the necessary experience inside and outside the educational system to pursue their occupational goals. This is in line with the concept of 'curriculum entitlement' for all young people, developed by the Further Education Unit for England and Wales in which careers education and guidance and participation in certain learning experiences should, it is argued, be part of every young person's

entitlement and should, therefore, be an obligation on providers (FEU, 1989). In this, girls especially need more targeted help to ensure that the full range of occupations is open to them and that 'career ladders' are always available to them in any occupation they undertake, whether at home or in the labour market.

Within the European Community the basis for the support machinery that is needed is already in place. The challenge will be to ensure that such measures work effectively to support and strengthen each country's transition system rather than weaken it. The Community must offer the means of recognition and transfer of qualifications and must have in place the support services to go with them which will guarantee that real freedom of movement and freedom of employment throughout the whole community becomes a reality. Institutions of the EC such as CEDEFOP need to turn their attention increasingly to such services as low-cost housing, financial support and advice and counselling to ensure that they can be co-ordinated effectively across the whole of Europe. The stated aim of creating a genuine 'European identity' may not be such a distant dream if we succeed in establishing integrated VET and Higher Education Systems that provide for individualised career decisions and social mobility for the coming generations of young Europeans.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

School to work trajectories in Germany

Note: The transition of men is interrupted by military or social service after age 18 for 15 to 21 months

Age 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
Education
Secondary School
TRAJECTORY I
Academic track → 2 A-levels
University or Polytechnic → Professional Employment/Training
skilled Employment
skilled Employment → University or Polytechnic
TRAJECTORY II
Career jobs with training Apprenticeships Vocational Education → Qualification
Skilled white/blue collar employment →
Advanced further Education/University or Polytechnic →
Dropouts → training scheme → employment
unemployment → casual jobs
casual jobs
TRAJECTORY III
Prevocation courses Non firm-based training Semiskilled jobs
skilled jobs (Swi.)
vocational qualifications → skilled work
semiskilled jobs (Swi.)
unemployment → semiskilled/unskilled jobs (Liv.)
unskilled jobs (Liv.)
TRAJECTORY IV
Unemployment Unskilled job Casual/peripheral jobs
unskilled jobs (Swi.)
unemployment → peripheral jobs → (Liv.)
peripheral jobs → unemployment

Appendix II

Research methodology: notes on interview strategies and analysis

Approach of the Liverpool – Bremen research team:

In order to have fully documented cases, interview transcripts were supplemented by a *'post scriptum'* which contained impressions and questions that came up during or after the interview as well as assessment of the interviewing situation. The analysis consisted of four steps.

1 A short case history which contained a description of the transition process in order to provide an overview of the sequence from school to the current situation.

2 A sentence-by-sentence interpretation of the interview text, pointing to the importance of aspects specific to the narration, for example emphasising or de-emphasising one's own activities or the influence of others and/or institutions. A major task at this stage was to develop sensitising concepts and first hypotheses about the respondents' main issues, as well as pointing to uncertainties regarding the interpretation.

3 Case interpretation was the heart of the whole analysis. It reconstructed the arguments of the respondent on the important issues, sorted according to the themes of the biographical interview: transition experiences, meaning of work, social support and self-concept.

4 The case interpretation documented and interpreted the 'biographical logic' that connected the point of view of the respondents on these issues and their interdependence. The case interpretations allowed us to move towards the next stage of comparative analysis without having to go back to the original interview.

Approach of the Swindon – Paderborn team

This team looked at the interaction between the structures and patterning of support for young people in the acquisition of adult status and the actions of the young people themselves. The focus was therefore less upon individual biographies *per se*, but rather upon the way individuals negotiated a passage through the structures and opportunities ahead of them. The interviews were semi-standardised, to ensure coverage of a number of key themes for young people in each trajectory. All interviewees were asked about their career plans, job-seeking and pattern of experiences in education, training and employment and the value placed upon these, as well as any who had experienced higher education were asked about financial support, career choices and future goals and prospects.

Some expert interviews organised around the same themes were undertaken contemporaneously with adults who could shed light upon the structures, opportunities and pathways open to young people in the particular local contexts of Swindon and Paderborn. Some of these had an overview of local provision, while others focused upon how young people progressed through their particular school, college, work, training or scheme. An initial thematic comparative analysis was then undertaken by the researchers and draft findings were written. The researchers then identified what additional information they might require to build a more coherent and comprehensive picture of each theme. They then supplemented their initial findings by seeking out supporting statistical and complementary information from previous interviews and surveys earlier in their careers, carrying out a second programme of expert interviews (taking the total to over 25 in each town) and, where necessary, recontacting the young people by telephone to seek specific additional information or to check out a particular interpretation. For example, asking for clarification about job-seeking strategies at different times from career histories, involving perhaps many changes of direction.

Appendix III

Profiles of young people interviewed in Liverpool and Bremen

Torsten

After leaving *Realschule*, Torsten started a school-based training as 'information technology assistant' because he didn't find an apprenticeship. Afterwards he got the *Fachabitur* at the *Fachoberschule* for electrical engineering. After being unemployed for some time he served his alternative service in an institution for the disabled. At the time of the interview he was in higher education, i.e. the first semester of studying informatics at the *Fachhochschule* (polytechnic). His intention was to switch to the university which would add another year to his education. He was unsure, however, whether to continue informatics or to change to psychology, which would involve considerable difficulties with his parents.

Axel

At secondary school Axel was very successful in scientific subjects. At the time of the interview he was studying electrical engineering, also with considerable success. Having finished most of the required courses, he intended to slow down the pace of his studies and develop other interests in order not to become an 'idiot savant'. After university he planned to do alternative service. For his future work, it was important for him that the firm did not produce any military goods or any technology not acceptable to him.

Gisela

At the end of school Gisela's interests were manifold so that she couldn't decide what to study. With her interest in sports and the advice of her family, Gisela started to attend a college for physiotherapy and was at the time of the interview in her third semester. When finished, she planned to combine her job with her interest in

horses by doing *Hippotherapie* (riding with disabled). For her children (which she wanted to have in her late 20s) she would give up work temporarily to look after them herself. Gisela had generous financial support from her parents.

Rita

Having failed the admission to the *Abitur*, Rita was still at school. She repeated courses so that her qualification would count as a good *Fachabitur*. Being very interested in promotion and artistic design she planned to start an apprenticeship in an advertising agency. She believed this profession to be very interesting and hectic as well, giving her the chance to use her creativity, to get ahead and to earn good money. Rita wanted to start a family and to work less only after having reached something in her profession that she can be 'proud of'.

Steffen

Steffen made a profession out of his hobby and served successfully an apprenticeship as a cook. During the time he waited for his apprenticeship he attended *Fachoberschule* but didn't go to the second year to get his *Fachabitur*. At the time of the interview Steffen was serving his alternative service in a youth hostel. Although he wanted to work in his profession afterwards he had the option to finish *Fachoberschule* and eventually study music, another important hobby of his.

Klaus

Klaus's vocational choice as hotel and restaurant assistant was influenced by the *Arbeitsamt*. He didn't succeed in getting an apprenticeship right after school so Klaus decided to attend a vocational school (*Berufsfachschule*) for catering. After several applications he finally got an apprenticeship in the hotel and restaurant business. Klaus then went to the *Fachoberschule* and got his *Fachabitur*. The next step in his life would be the national service whereafter he might continue in his profession and work his way up or change to the police. He viewed his military service as a kind of test and preparation for the latter choice.

Gabi

Although she first wanted to continue school, to her surprise Gabi was offered an apprenticeship as a communication assistant with the German *Telekom* right after *Realschule*, which she accepted for reasons of security, gaining the status of a permanent civil servant. At the time of the interview she had been fully employed for one year. She was interested in working her way up, which would eventually include further studies at an administration college.

Katrin

Katrin wanted to become a florist or a *Kindergarten* teacher after *Hauptschule*. Because of the poor job market she finally had to make do with an apprenticeship as a hairdresser. After she failed an intermediate examination, she changed to another salon where she was able to get the necessary practical training. She got her qualification only after the second trial and was afterwards working in the same shop. Since she felt that she was still treated like an apprentice, she left after one month and worked in another shop in the futile hope of getting better money. At the time of the interview she was unemployed and doing only casual jobs. Since she suffered from a skin allergy and problems with her knee she hoped to get financial support from the Jobcentre for retraining as an office worker.

Manfred

Manfred saw no point in continuing with the *Gymnasium*, left school in the 12th grade and took up a job in a hotel for about one year. Following this time he served his national service. After applying as an apprentice optician without success, he decided to do a non-firm-based commercial training as a wholesale and export clerk. At the time of the interview he was just finishing his exams. Nevertheless, it was quite clear for Manfred that he did not want to work in this profession because he can't identify with the aims of business. Instead of this he wanted to retake his *Abitur* in order to go to the university. He had not decided what subject to study afterwards.

Bernd

Bernd didn't succeed in finding an apprenticeship after *Hauptschule* and decided to attend *Berufsfachschule* for electrical engineering, which supplied him with the *Realschule* certificate as well. After another unsuccessful trial to get an apprenticeship, he continued by doing a BFS/q course as a qualified electrician at the same school. He then embarked upon a course at *Fachoberschule* where he got the *Fachabitur*, enabling him to go to polytechnic. At the time of the interview he was doing his national service. His intention was to study automation technology afterwards.

Doris

After the *Realschule*, Doris applied various times for an apprenticeship as a commercial or administration clerk which turned out to be unsuccessful. She then attended business college (*Höhere Handelsschule*) for two years. Her later applications were more successful and at the time of the interview she was in her second year of an apprenticeship as a wholesale and export clerk. She was certain to be taken on afterwards and intended to stay there to get practical experience; only after that would she want to change the company or eventually study languages and go abroad for a limited time.

Christiane

It had always been Christiane's dream to become a nurse. This desire was deepened through two practical placements that she served during the final grades of *Realschule*, one in a hospital, the other in an old people's home. Since she was still too young for a training right after school, she worked in an old ladies' home for half a year before she started training as a nurse. Failing an initial exam after half a year she agreed to the hospital's proposal to do a practical placement and then to start again. At the time of the interview she was at the end of her first year of the three years' training. Her intention was first to work after her training for five or six years and then start a family. With a child she would like to continue working as a night nurse.

Norbert

After finishing *Hauptschule*, Norbert got an apprenticeship as a painter but very soon left, because he didn't like that occupation. A second apprenticeship as an electrician was broken off as well because he felt exploited, doing only hard manual work without being trained. Being unemployed, he went to a remedial scheme (ABM G3) in the metal branch until he found another apprenticeship as a toolmaker. This apprenticeship was ended in the second year because the company closed down their Bremen branch. At the time of the interview Norbert was doing a job with a metalworking company, waiting to recommence his apprenticeship. Although he had to start again, he was looking forward to it and keen to get his qualification.

Karin

After finishing *Hauptschule*, Karin was unemployed for three months until she attended a domestic science school for six months. She started an apprenticeship as a sales assistant but broke this off after three months because she felt bored and lonely. After another three months' unemployment she accepted an offer to attend an ABM G3 scheme, wood branch. After 18 months on the scheme she started another apprenticeship as a hairdresser, which she eventually quit when the *Meister* left the house. Karin gave up the idea to finish training altogether. At the time of the interview she was working unskilled at a coffee plant.

Sven

It is unclear whether Sven finished *Hauptschule* successfully. After he left, he attended vocational school two times a week until he started to attend a remedial scheme (ABM G3) in the metal branch. He was given his notice after some time for being unpunctual and not working properly. During the following 18 months' unemployment he got no money at all, financing his life by stealing motorbikes and cars. At the time of the interview he was again in the same scheme doing the same job. He said that he intended to save money to do an apprenticeship at the same place, which seems to be a quite unrealistic perspective.

Conni

Conni had a very hard childhood, grew up with her grandparents and still has a lot of arguments at home. Since the end of *Hauptschule*, Conni was unemployed for quite some time. She broke off two apprenticeships as a butcher's sales assistant because she was treated badly in one place and eventually came to the conclusion that, being an animal lover, she didn't want to sell meat at all. Her dream job as an animal keeper could not be realised because of a skin allergy. At the time of the interview Conni was gaining basic commercial knowledge in a remedial scheme. She hoped to get an apprenticeship as a lawyer's and notary's assistant in an office where she had served a four weeks' placement.

Steve

Despite an initial intention to leave school at 16 and become a photographer, Steve was persuaded by older friends to stay on and take A-levels. He then went to polytechnic and took a degree in public policy. Not having a clear idea what to do next he went abroad with a friend for three months. On his return he took up a job as an insurance salesman, but left after six months. At the time of interview he was unemployed with no clear ideas about his future. He spent his time helping his father with his carpentry business.

John

John had little idea when at school about a future career. On obtaining examination results which exceeded his expectations he decided to go to college. At the time of interview he was studying social and industrial studies at a college of higher education. He found his course boring and badly organised. He was still unclear about a future career but hoped to get a job where he would not be in an office all the time.

Cathy

Cathy's ambition had always been to become a teacher. She was persuaded by her brother to take a BA degree in English rather than a BEd degree. At the time of interview, following her postgraduate teacher training, she was about to take up a post at a junior school.

She had been supported financially by her parents throughout her studies and was still living at home, though she was intending to move in with her boy-friend.

Laura

Laura came from a working-class family and her father strongly encouraged her to stay on at school to obtain qualifications, as he wanted his children to have a different life to his own. Laura had just completed a four-year course in business studies and Spanish at polytechnic, which had involved a year in Spain. At the time of interview she was unemployed and looking for work. Laura was engaged to a Liverpool man who did not want to leave the city, and she was, therefore, only looking for work locally. She felt that this was a handicap, and that she might have to broaden her search beyond the city.

Michael

Michael was originally employed by the local council as a transport clerk. Following extensive reorganisation of the council's workforce, he was offered the opportunity to train as a civil engineering technician. Michael had enthusiastically accepted, and he felt that his career prospects were good. He was married with a baby. His aspirations and self-confidence had risen since leaving school.

Tracy

Tracy had not particularly enjoyed school. Her only good subjects were English and typing and she had drifted into an office job after a number of YTS placements. Tracy had become bored with her job, and would have liked something more challenging and with more variety. She was unable, however, to think of anything which would suit her, or which she would be good at, and she seemed to lack self-confidence in her abilities. She was also trapped in her present job because she was supporting her family financially. Her parents were unemployed and one of her brothers had recently been declared redundant.

William

On leaving school, William had got a job with a television repair firm through the agency of his brother. He left when he felt that he was not receiving proper training. He had then had a number of YTS placements but had found them unsatisfactory. A friend then got him a post as an apprentice electrician. William enjoyed his training and was confident about his future. He was a keen sportsman. He had a girl-friend who was expecting his child and his ambition was to take them on a working tour around the world.

Judy

It had been Judy's goal to become a hairdresser after she and her friends had set each other's hair as teenagers. At the time of the interview she was on a YTS placement as a trainee hairdresser. Despite being in a position to achieve her ambition, and despite basically enjoying her work, Judy was rather dissatisfied with her circumstances. She felt that the financial rewards were very poor, and that she was having to work too hard, because other trainees had left. Thus, she was unable to attend college to pursue the theoretical aspects of her training and obtain a qualification. Despite this, Judy still saw her future in hairdressing and expressed confidence about the future.

Alan

On leaving school, Alan had got a job in a carpet warehouse. Despite disliking the job which he thought had no prospects, Alan had stayed and stuck with it as he felt the need for security in a depressed labour market. He had been made redundant, however, by a new owner; at the time of interview he was unemployed and was living with his mother and doing occasional casual work. Alan found unemployment very difficult to cope with financially and emotionally. Apart from his mother, he felt that he was becoming socially isolated and that his only friend was his dog. He was not optimistic about the future.

Brian

After being introduced to the guitar by his brother, Brian had become a keen amateur musician. He had determined to take up music as his profession; this ambition had been strengthened when he had attended a YTS training centre which specialised in music technology. He was living with his parents and had been supported by them financially while he had been trying to break into the professional music world. Brian had enjoyed going for auditions and was not depressed by his failures. At the time of interview, he had just succeeded in getting a regular job with a band which toured the continent.

Lynne

At the time of interview Lynne had been unemployed for 18 months. She was living by herself in a flat and had been there for three years, having left home at 17. Lynne had had a number of training places in office jobs and in social work/community care, but she had either given up these placements because she found the work unsatisfactory, or had not been kept on when the placement ended. Basically, she was quite keen on office work, and her immediate intention was to attend a commercial college and improve her qualifications. Lynne felt that she had wasted enough time and must seriously attempt to pursue a career. Having got a settled career she could then have children. She expressed optimism about her future and self-confidence in her abilities.

Angela

Angela was disabled, and after an unhappy first experience at a YTS training centre, she had moved to a training centre for disabled people. She was learning office skills and was on a long placement at an office which used to be part of the training agency, placing trainees. Angela enjoyed her work and hoped to be kept on at the end of her training, but was not very optimistic about this. She lived at home with her mother.

Malcolm

At the time of interview, Malcolm was undergoing training as a photographer. He enjoyed both the practical and theoretical aspects of his training, although he felt that the facilities at the college he was attending were quite inadequate and outdated. In addition to his college course, he was employed part time as a photographic assistant at a firm where he had worked before going to college. After leaving school, he had begun to study electronics but gave it up because of lack of interest. He had then been unemployed for ten months before finding a photographic assistant's job through a job club. He expressed self-confidence about his future prospects and was quite keen to become self-employed.

Anthony

On leaving school, Anthony had become an apprentice plasterer. At the end of his first year he left on the grounds that he had not been given any holiday or time off work. Since then (i.e. for five years) he had been unemployed, apart from a couple of months as a gardener, a job he didn't like. He did casual work occasionally but found that this discouraged him because the people he worked for were usually school friends, who now had secure jobs. Anthony was somewhat depressed by his long unemployment. He felt that he ought to go back to college but somehow couldn't get up the motivation to go and enrol. Both his brothers were also unemployed; only his sisters had jobs. He stated that this kind of situation was quite typical for the area where he was living.

Linda

Linda was currently unemployed, having had a number of previous jobs – working in McDonalds, as a chambermaid in a hotel, and as a cashier in a garage. She found unemployment difficult to cope with financially, but it had not sapped her basic self-confidence or motivation. She was living with her boy-friend in her mother's house and seemed to have strong social support. Linda felt that the area where she was living was a negative factor when she was applying for jobs; she was desperate to leave the area, which was characterised by heavy drug usage and a high crime rate. As her

boy-friend was also unemployed, however, this was currently an unrealistic ambition. Linda expressed the ambition to become a bus driver.

Stephanie

Stephanie had been keen to leave school as she did not like having people in authority over her. She was living with her grandmother as she got on badly with her stepfather. On leaving school she had gone on a YTS course which was supposed to train her for working in the theatre, but there was no practical placement in a theatre available for her: her placement had been on a farm. She felt, therefore, that the course was badly organised and basically of little use to her. Since then, the only job she had been able to obtain was working part time as a school cleaner, a position she had got through her mother. Her only immediate prospect of a full-time job was to become a general assistant in the school where she worked, and she had applied for a transfer to this position.

Becoming adults... focuses on the experiences of young people in England and Germany during their transition from youth to adult status in the workplace and society during a period of persisting unemployment.

By collecting data on the education, training and employment systems and individual experiences of 17 – 22 year olds in both countries, the authors identified clear differences. The main differences were that:

- **In Britain** the transition from youth to adult status was more accelerated. At all ages, British young people were more likely to have sought employment, terminated education and left home (than their German peers).
- **In Germany** the transition was more extended because of the longer-standing tradition of vocational training and a greater proportion of young people qualifying for higher education.
- **In Britain** for those with clear career goals, there was no clearly regulated pathway towards achieving them.
- **In Germany** there was a more highly structured system which offered alternatives and a longer time frame for decision-making.

By analysing information about the experiences of young people, the researchers found that in both countries there were several types of transition behaviour which affected career patterns in specific ways. These career patterns were also influenced by the institutional support services and the standard of Vocational Education and Training available, issues of gender, race and social class, as well as financial and family situations.

The researchers emphasise the urgent need for a comprehensive policy in both countries towards structuring the different pathways in a person-centered way and with more financial support and careers advice. A wide range of routes to skilled status, the reduction of gender-based and regional disadvantage and accommodating mobility should be high on the agenda for a transition system suitable for Europe.

This book is the result of collaboration between British and German researchers. It builds on research supported by the European Commission and was funded by the Anglo-German Foundation. It is a follow-up to an earlier study, 'Youth and work: transition to employment in England and Germany'.

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